

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: IDENTITY, POWER, AND DIFFERENCE:
THE MANAGEMENT OF ROLES AND SELF
AMONG PUBLIC RELATIONS
PRACTITIONERS

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Doctor of Philosophy, 2007

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Public relations is important to organizations because this function has boundary spanning roles and responsibilities. Public relations practitioners work between the organization and various publics to communicate messages in an effort to inform and influence the organization's leadership and dominant coalition and to inform and effect change among the organization's stakeholders. According to public relations theory, the communicators in the public relations department must match the diversity in the internal and external populations the organizations serve (e.g., L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2000; Sha & Ford, 2007). However, public relations has been called a "lily-white profession" (Layton, 1981) and has been classified as "gay industry" (Woods & Lucas, 1993). Recent surveys about the field have indicated modest changes in the profession's demographic makeup (cf. 2005 PR Week Diversity Survey).

The aim of this dissertation research is to examine and explore how power and identity merge and diverge in the everyday, professional lives of minority public relations practitioners. This research identified how these practitioners navigate through organizational networks, how they manage identity in their organizations, and how these practitioners interpret the concept of power. To recognize how practitioners interpret their experiences in organizations and to examine the meaning-making of practitioners, I needed the resulting product to be descriptive data that could be unraveled and clarified, then bracketed back to the Excellence Theory of public relations. Therefore, I utilized qualitative methodology. I conducted in-depth interviews with 51 public relations practitioners of various backgrounds—African American and Hispanic heterosexual practitioners; white lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) practitioners; and African American and Hispanic gay male practitioners.

The findings revealed some particularly distinct themes. Black and Hispanic public relations practitioners and lesbian, gay male, and bisexual (LGB) public relations practitioners encountered heterosexism, racism, sexism, and occasionally all of these prejudices at the same time. As research participants encountered these barriers, they said they simultaneously resisted and enacted countermeasures to avoid those pitfalls. Power was perceived as having access to knowledge; access and control of financial resources; holding a seat in the dominant coalition; and having a high-ranking position in the organization. Participants achieved power and empowerment in their organizational roles through various avenues—avenues such as mentoring, seeking social support, and reaching out.

DIVERSITY, THE ACHIEVEMENT OF POWER, AND THE PUBLIC
RELATIONS FUNCTION

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2007

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Dedication

Those who sow in tears
will reap with songs of joy. – Psalm 126:5

This dissertation is the culmination of a beautiful struggle, and this dissertation is dedicated to so many people—those still here in body and those who are now gone to see God and meet the ancestors—who have helped me along my way and in my struggle.

First and foremost, I thank my Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. As it is written in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Without my personal faith, which has deepened over my four years at the University of Maryland, my journey through graduate school would not have been feasible or possible. I could not have done anything without my Rock and my Redeemer.

I thank my family. To my parents, Cheryl L. Johnson-Tindall and Nathaniel W. Tindall who gave me so much and asked for little and encouraged me to preserve. To my brother, Nathaniel who listened to me. To my grandparents, Doretha and Jimmie L. Johnson, for always believing in me, for always letting me have the books I wanted, for letting me dream, and for teaching me independence. "Get that education" and "study your books" was (and still is) their mantra for the grandchildren, and I think I've lived up to. To my aunt and uncle, Jim and Dorothy

Johnson, for feeding me and giving advice. Moving to Maryland was never a possibility until I realized I had a support system that arrived 13 years earlier.

Thank you to my mentors: Dr. Vivian Hobbs at Florida A&M University, Frank Cartisano at Lakewood High School, Dr. Paulette Walker at the University of South Florida, and Dr. Derina Holtzhausen at the University of South Florida. They always provided what I needed—a kick in the pants, a good word, calming advice. Hugs and kisses to my friends that didn't make fun of my decision to get a Ph.D. and supported me through this solitary, lonely, and often soul-crushing process. I thank you for your encouragement even if you didn't know what I was babbling about when I started on my diatribes about comprehensive exams, epistemology, etc. But you listened and nodded and pretended to understand and said everything would be okay. To my graduate school friends, I couldn't have survived graduate school without our companionship and friendship. I am grateful for your friendships through the good and bad times.

This dissertation is also dedicated to the lives and talents of three amazing women who have passed on: Nicole Williams, Peggy Peterman, and Beatrice Elridge. Each of them brought something special and different into my life—a spirit of adventure, a love for my people, a need to be a griot and teller of our people's story, a love for God and my family; if I had not known them, I would be hollow.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee members who were generous with their time and patience as I wrote this work. Thank you to Dr. Mari Boor Tonn, Dr. Michele Gelfand, Dr. Shawn Parry-Giles, Dr. Elizabeth Toth, and Dr. Ursula Stroh for agreeing to serve on my committee. A special thanks to Dr. Linda Aldoory who has served as my advisor since I was admitted to this program.

I would like to thank the practitioners who gave of their time and participated in this research. Without them sharing their experiences in the field of public relations and without their encouragement to complete and continue with this project, I would not have been able to complete this research.

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Chapter One: Introduction

According to the Excellence Theory (L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Dozier, L. A. Grunig, & J. E. Grunig, 1995; L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Ehling, 1992), diversity is one of the 14 characteristics of public relations excellence. Organizations that embrace employee diversity were found to value communication excellence. From the assumptions and recommendations of the Excellence Theory, workplace diversity is achieved by allowing the internal composition of the organization to equal or match the diversity external to the organization (Beer, 1981; Weick, 1978; Dozier, L. A. Grunig, & J. E. Grunig, 1995).

Oftentimes, for minority practitioners, communicating between their organizations and the public of their origin is an assumed responsibility because the organizations presumes that these practitioners do not "suffer from the same blind spots as do other members of senior management" (Dozier, L. A. Grunig, & J. E. Grunig, 1995). For example, practitioners of color are assumed to easily transfer and translate information between two racially identified worlds.

Despite the potential for diversity to contribute to excellent public relations and the claims made by the Excellence study, diversity is an oft-neglected and under-examined aspect in research and theory (Sha & Ford, 2007; Pompper, 2004, 2005). The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the potential impact of diversity on public relations by examining factors such as power, identity, requisite variety, and career experiences of minority practitioners. This study was not a simple demographic exercise or a descriptive study of career choices. Rather, I explored how practitioners negotiated their multiple identities in organizations, what methods they used to achieve

organizational power, and how the strategies used to achieve power and to communicate with upper management both deflected and reflected their identities.

Although diversity has been important to the Excellence Theory and the practice of public relations, there are limitations regarding the Excellence study's conceptualization of diversity. First, the concept of requisite variety was limited to racial and gender diversity (L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Dozier, L. A. Grunig, & J. E. Grunig, 1995; L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Ehling, 1992). The confluence of multiple identities was not taken into account. Instead, there was a focus on the binary of male-not-female and white-not-non-white. Glossed over were the intersections of gender, race, and other identities, such as sexual orientation, ability, and religious affiliation. Second, the original conceptualizations of requisite variety did not take into account the concept of avowed and ascribed identities—what cultural or ethnic associations the practitioner declared and what associations are pinned to the practitioner because of appearance (Sha, 1995). If hired to communicate to a specific minority audience, the avowed and ascribed identities of the practitioner may facilitate or hinder his or her advancement in public relations (Sha, 1995; Tillery-Larkin, 1999; Mallette, 1995). Rather than confine this study to these earlier, limited notions of diversity, this dissertation research expanded the definitions to include intersectional identities and avowed and ascribed identities.

Also, I considered issues of power and access to resources, information, mentors, and upper management. Different perspectives and approaches to power exist. Specifically, in this dissertation, I was interested in the interdependence between the nets of power that Foucault (1978) discussed and how people navigate between the links in

those nets. I investigated practitioners' perceptions of power and explored how identity impacts their perceptions of power, relationships with upper management, and strategies to obtain power.

Researchers who have examined and explored issues of diversity and identity in organizations have argued that strategies to promote equity must focus on challenging the hegemonic practices of the organization (e.g., Acker, 1990, 1999; Fletcher & Merrill-Sands, 1998; Ely, 1999). According to Kolb and Merrill-Sands (1999), "If one wants to create change, it is necessary to challenge the basic assumptions that underlie work practices and organizational cultures" (p. 3). Holtzhausen and Voto (2000) described the role of a practitioner as being a catalyst for change within the organization. In this research, I looked at whether certain public relations practitioners acted as organizational activists in response to the societal and institutional barriers they perceived and actually faced in the organization.

This dissertation is uniquely public relations because the study looks at the many dimensions of the organizational face and how diversity contributes to excellent organizational communication. This work examines the practitioner's role as an internal and external communicator of values and beliefs and on the function's impetus to maintain and respect all aspects of diversity. For this study, I conducted telephone and face-to-face, individual in-depth interviews with 51 practitioners of differing identities (white gay males, white female lesbians, black and Hispanic gay males, African American and black heterosexual males and females, and Hispanic heterosexual males and females). The qualitative method and in-depth interviews specifically were appropriate for this research because I was interested in understanding the contours and

essence of human behavior (Lindlof, 1995); the richness and complexity of data I needed could not be obtained from other sources. Also, qualitative research allowed me to explore the meanings made and created by my participants regarding their social interactions. The research questions directing this research were the following: How do minority public relations practitioners understand and make meaning of their raced, gendered, and sexual identities within their organizations? How do minority public relations practitioners understand and make meaning of organizational power? How do minority public relations practitioners negotiate and/or challenge any perceived constraints resulting from organizational power?

In general, findings showed that practitioners defined power through the traditional lenses of influence, resources, rank, and access to the most powerful in the organization. Having the ability and opportunity to be themselves and express themselves was important to practitioners, and many practitioners received the opportunity to interact with diverse publics, including people from their own identity-related groups, because of an organizational lack or need and the practitioner's willingness to fill that role. Practitioners pivoted between their regular job-related duties and identity-related duties.

Terminology

This study explored identity and power for African American and Hispanic heterosexual practitioners; white lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) practitioners; and African American and Hispanic LGB practitioners. Due to the complex and often controversial debates around terminology used to describe individuals and their identities, I wanted to include here my definitions of the terms used in this dissertation.

African American. This term is used to describe persons who are U.S.-born Americans of African descent (Greene, 1994; Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001; Rodriguez, 2000). Rodriguez noted that the label hints at a geographic origin—Africa—rather than previous labels that once suggested color or race—Negro, Black, and mulatto. With regard to the practitioners I interviewed, they self-identified as African American.

Black. The term *Black* was used to refer to persons of African origin from throughout the Diaspora, including the Caribbean, South and Central America, and Canada. I used this term, along with the term *white*, with the full knowledge and understanding that these terms are socially constructed and have no biological basis (Omi & Winant, 1994; Gesslbauer, 2003).

Hispanic. A term first introduced in the 1980 census, *Hispanic* refers to "individuals who reside in the United States and who were born in or trace the background of their families to one of the Spanish-speaking Latin American nations or to Spain" (Marin & VanOss, 1991, p. 1). This umbrella term cannot be applied universally to everyone who fits under this definition because some resist the designation Hispanic, preferring to be identified by their nation of origin. The term Hispanic refers to an ethnic group composed of different races and from different countries (Vasquez, 1994; Boyd-Franklin & Garcia-Preto, 1994; Rodriguez, 2000; Grunig, Toth, and Hon, 2001; Wildman, 1997). The term Hispanic minimizes diversity and, in some cases, erases various communities, cultures, and ethnicities. Subveri and Rios (2005) argued that a unifying Hispanic identity through language is a misleading anachronism and that media professionals must understand that the community is made up of various cultural populations. According to those authors, "The challenge for public relations practitioners,

media professionals, and others working with and relating to the expanding Latino communities across the county is to recognize both the simplicity of Latino identity, its complexity, and how situational the expression of that identity can be” (p. 44). As Wildman (1997) observed, "This act of naming essentializes a highly diverse population, making it appear as a homogenous whole. The term essentializes many different communities—the Cubanos, Puerto Ricanos, Chicanos—all into one lump" (p. 324). Second, the idea of Hispanic is rooted in U.S. constructions of racial identity and racial classifications in which race is an inexplicable fact and fate of life and is assigned to a person forever (Rodriguez, 2000; Omi & Winant, 1994). Some scholars use the terms Hispanic, Latina, and Latino interchangeably.

However, bearing those limitations in mind, for consistency, I will use Hispanic in my dissertation as a generic term for individuals who identify with and trace their family lineage from Caribbean, Central American, and South American countries. My use of this term is based on the example of other public relations scholars who have used the term when describing practitioners of this racial and ethnic background (e.g., Pompper, 2006; Hon & Brunner, 2000; Len-Rios, 1998, 2002; Gibson, 2002; Zerbinos & Clanton, 1993; Ferreira, 1993). If practitioners used a different term for himself, herself, or one’s ethnic group, I used that in their quotations and in their personal descriptions. This route of allowing the practitioner to name himself or herself and label his or her community is in line with Subveri and Rios (2005). Writing about Latino identity, Subveri and Rios stated, “The basic rule to follow when dealing with Latinos in professional or personally settings is: when in doubt, ask cordially about the labels or terms to use to refer to the individual or group. Most importantly, engage in open-minded

conversations that will help you learn about the cultural patterns that best define them, and how to relate to them to meet common goals” (p. 44).

White/Whiteness. In the United States, race is defined in color terms and through “common understanding” (Rodriguez, 2000). According to Rodriguez, the White (European) race is the highly favored option among the four colors or “races”: black (African), red (North American), and yellow (Asian):

In this color palette, what makes a person “white” is the absence of any “black” or nonwhite blood, and what makes a person “black” is the presence of “black” blood. White is white because it is not mixed with any other color; it is “pure.”...in all four cases, the white category is the norm or the referent, and the other three groups are nonwhite...In broad and blunt terms, this is the way in which “race” has been simply understood in the United States; this has been its social construction (pp. 28-29)

The term *White* will be used in reference to individuals of European descent who do not identify or claim Hispanic ethnicity in their interviews when explicitly asked (Tatum, 1997; Gesslbauer, 2003; Wong & Cho, 2005). Again, I will defer to the participants, allowing them the right to define their identity. The term Whiteness will be used only in reference to the critical and cultural phenomenon of deconstructing societal norms that seem to privilege, as Hale (1998) observed, “‘those people who think of themselves as white’—a naming James Baldwin created to render visible this process of racial making” (p. 8). The discussion of Whiteness is a way of observing and breaking apart how “...Whiteness operates as the unmarked norm against which other identities are marked

and racialized, the seemingly un-raced center of a racialized world” (Rasmussen, Klinenberg, Nexica, & Wray, 2001, p. 10).

Racial identification is important in understanding the relevance of both terms—White and Whiteness—separately and as a matching set. Racial identification or “one’s sense of belonging to a racial or ethnic group” (Knowles & Peng, 2005, p. 224) frames and molds what an individual believes and how an individual behaves in-group and with heterogeneous individuals (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1994; Perry, 2002; Phinney, 1996; Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998; Knowles & Peng, 2005). When studied in the United States, racial identity is typically limited to groups that are numerical minorities; absent from this research are White Americans, the dominant group in American society both culturally and in many areas numerically (Wong & Cho, 2005). The racial identity of White Americans is ambiguous to social scientists; as Wong and Cho noted, “Oddly enough, however, there has been no straightforward, contemporary examination of the racial identity of average White Americans, as a phenomenon comparable to the racial identity of African Americans or Asian Americans” (p. 700) The reasons for this lack of identity among White Americans are varied, ranging from a decreased need for identification due to a dominant status in the society and a continuing double standard if Whites were to affirm their cultural and racial identity (Swain, 2002; Gurin, 1985; Wong & Cho, 2005). The issues of racial identity are important because identity provides some clues to how the individual perceives himself or herself, gauges how he or she fits into the society. As Brewer (2001) noted, identity offers a window to the individual, suggesting “...in some way to the idea that an individual’s self-concept is derived, to some extent and in some sense, from the social relationships and social groups he or she

participates in” (p. 117). It is important to note again that racial identity and ethnic identity are socially constructed phenomenon whose definitions and meanings have ebbed and flowed, been changed and rearranged over time (cf. Tatum, 1997).

Gender. A “learned social system” (Aldoory, 2007, p. 404), gender is a socially constructed phenomenon that defines men and women. Gender has long been associated with and associated as female. For example, Aldoory (2007) noted that gender research in public relations has concentrated on women. “It is narrowly focused, in that the majority of work has examined experiences and perceptions of *women* in public relations—there has been limited work on *gender* as a social construction guiding public relations practice, or on *men* as gendered beings that are also affected by the feminization of public relations” (p. 399).

West and Zimmerman (2003) distinguished between sex and gender. Gender is “the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” (p. 63). Ely (1999) conceptualized gender into two interrelated parts. Gender identity is the individual component; this is “the sense one makes of the fact that one is male or female” (Fletcher & Ely, 2003, p. 3). The second component is the social interactions and structures that govern differences between men and women. Gender relations are “the structural arrangements that give meaning to the categories male and female and shape people’s experience as members of those groups” (p. 3). Rakow (1992) and Wood (2001) similarly defined gender as interrelated components—a sense-making classification activity and a prescription for social interaction. For the purposes of this research, I have adopted the notions of gender as proposed by Fletcher and Ely (2003), Ely (1999), Aldoory (2007), Rakow (1992), and

Wood (2001). I equate gender with the management and influence of societal assumptions and concepts related to one's sex category.

Minority. Minority has been defined as "any part of the population that differs from others in some characteristics and as a result is subjected to differential treatment" (L. A. Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001, p. 122). In many scholarly discussions of minorities, certain groups are excluded. Wu (2002) discussed this element of inclusion and exclusion: "People speak of 'American' as if it means 'white' and 'minority' as if it means 'black'" (p. 20). In U.S. society, the designation of minority has been placed on those minority groups that are underrepresented or disadvantaged, not necessarily those who are in the statistical minority (Wu, 2002). Also, the realities of being a minority are intertwined with the power, privilege, and control of the dominant group in a society. The dominant group oppresses and suppresses minority groups through the exclusion and denial of positions within mainstream institutions and through controlling images (Collins, 2000).

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). The National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA) provides a supplement to the *Associated Press Stylebook*, the popular manual on journalistic form and technique, on the proper terms for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community. I will follow their conventions and definitions. Bisexual, lesbian, and gay refer to persons who have affection toward and sexual attraction to either sex, women, or men respectively. Transgender refers to individuals whose biological sex does not match their expressed gender identity. Transgender individuals, in Feinberg's (1996) account, "traverse, bridge, or blur the boundary of the gender expression they were assigned at birth" (p. x). An umbrella term

or an inclusive "generic semantic" (Bolin, 1998, p. 78), transgender covers crossdressers, male-to-female transsexuals, female-to-male transsexuals, transvestites, intersex individuals, and "those who lie between the traditional identity of transsexual (as someone seeking hormonal and sex-assignment surgery)" (Bolin, 1998, p. 78; NLGJA, n.d.).

Heterosexual. This term refers to men and women who are attracted to the opposite sex. I acknowledge that this term and definition are coded with social and political ramifications. Sexuality and gender are socially constructed and highly contested terms. S. Jackson (2005) argued that heterosexuality acts as one of the institutions that sorts and orders social relations: "[Heterosexuality] entails who washes the sheets as well as what goes on between them" (p. 18). According to Ingraham (2005), the coupled meanings, definitions, and identities—heterosexual and homosexual, male and female—are social conventions that impose a structure of "thinking straight." Thinking straight is "thinking in terms of opposites and polarities when none exist and naturalizing social practices and beliefs rather than seeing them as social, political, and economic creations" (p. 2). I avoid taking an essentialist view of sexual orientation to the best of my ability; I did make some slip-ups that will be further illuminated in the dissertation. In the course of this research, I respected my participants' sexual orientations as complex entities that are "potentially fluid, changeable over time, and vary[ing] across social contexts and cultures" (Garnets & Kimmel, 2003, p. 3).

Sexual orientation. According to Garnets and Kimmel (2003), there are three theoretical frameworks to view sexual orientation. The essentialist frame views sexual orientation as a universal and unchanging predisposition of the individual. In the social

constructionist approach, the social meaning that a culture or a society attaches to a sexual orientation is more important than one's actual sexual preference. Sexual orientations are the products of cultural and sociohistorical circumstances. According to the authors, "Different societies organize human sexual relations in a variety of ways, and therefore the meaning of sexual orientation is specific to particular cultures" (p. 24). The interactionist approach integrated the essentialist and social constructionist stances, focusing on the common elements between the two. Herek (1994) pointed out that the main assumption of this view is the following:

...commonalities exist among cultures in patterns of sexual behavior and attraction: these commonalities have a biological basis to at least some extent. At the same time, the meanings associated with these patterns are acknowledged to vary widely among cultures, and the differences must be understood to recognize which aspects of human sexuality are universal and which are culturally specific. (p. 154)

For this research, I will use the third framework.

Delimitations

There are several delimitations for this research. The first delimitation is linked to the emphasis and examination of intersectionality in this study. Intersectionality is the assumption that race, gender, class, and sexual orientation are salient characteristics that shadow individuals in every interaction (Weber, 2001; Landry, in press; Zinn & Dill, 1996; Collins, 1993, 2000; Brewer, 1993; King, 1988).

In theory, this is a wonderful concept to unpack and address. However, in practical application, it is a task complicated by the data and the situations that arise from

the data. The practical study of intersectionality with real data from real subjects requires a guiding framework that is not available yet. Although I made an effort to study and frame this dissertation in intersectional terms, it is not as intersectional as some scholars would suggest or hope for.

Another issue that requires me to delimit the findings of this research is the concept of the closet as it applies to lesbian, gay male, and bisexual public relations practitioners. The “closet” is an identity management tool used by some lesbians, gay males, and bisexuals to re-present his or her sexuality to certain audiences. According to Woods and Lucas (1994), “To be ‘in the closet’ is to misrepresent one’s sexuality to others, to encourage (or at least permit) them to draw a conclusion that one knows is false” (p. 26). This lived experience of “being in the closet” is a focal point in my research because I chose to focus on the experiences of LGB practitioners.

Sampling from all segments of this community of practitioners is difficult because locating and convincing people who are in the closet to participate is often difficult to do (e.g., Morgan & Brown, 1993; Griffith & Hebl, 2002). According to one set of authors, “‘Closeted’ gay and lesbian workers are more difficult to identify and may be more reluctant to participate, a problem that research using gay and lesbian participants generally faces” (Griffith & Hebl, 2002, p. 1197). I worked within the confines of the LGBT network groups at various corporations, the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, and other gay- and lesbian-friendly outlets; the Web-publications and organizations that I contacted may have had a demographic that skewed to more out individuals. In the final outcome, I did not have any participants that were fully closeted, thus making this research not as representative of my population as it should be.

This study does not have the capacity to locate individuals who are closeted or those who have not fully “come out” to themselves, families, co-workers, or associates. Because this research focused on qualitative interviews and relied upon interpersonal contact (e.g., snowball sample) to obtain contacts, locating pronounced closeted individuals would be difficult. There would not be anonymity but confidentiality with the research. However, there are a few studies that have located closeted individuals. Several researchers have explored online communities and the various functions of these communities in the coming out process. According to Heinz, Gu, Inuzuka, and Zender (2002), “The relative safety and anonymity of cyberspace must appeal to a minority whose minority status often does not become visible until a rela space-time-person association occurs” (p. 108). Heinz et al. wrote that the construction of LGBT existence and identities is based on traditional hegemonic ideas even if it occurs on the Internet: “Language and communication play pivotal roles in the processes involved when GLBT people come out and acknowledge—whether to themselves and/or to others—their nonheterosexual orientations” (p. 109). In his proposal that chat rooms provided a source for interaction and socialization, Sanders (2005) argued that online communication mechanisms such as chat rooms were opportunities to build a community. In his study of gay youth, Thomas (2002) argued that the chat room facilitated the coming-out process: “Through chat rooms, gay youth are able to transcend their social contexts to anonymously interact with other gay people in order to gain affirmation of same-sex feelings and desires, explore their sexuality, ask questions, make on- and off-line friendships, and find sexual and romantic partners” (p. 1).

Significance of the Research

This research contributed to both public relations theory and practice. I will first discuss theoretical contributions of the research. First, my research identified the interpretations of power that minority public relations practitioners hold and the strategies used by these practitioners to obtain organizational power. The Excellence Theory proposed that both the public relations department and the individual practitioner can achieve power through knowledge of the practice, the demonstration of expertise, and the practice of boundary spanning. I examined if there are other strategies used by practitioners to achieve power and in what ways practitioners access their identities to accumulate power.

Second, this research helped in understanding how the confluence of race, gender, and sexual orientation impact upon the opportunities, strategies, and relationships of practitioners. In the search for a mentor or the attempt to gain entry into a certain organizational network, race, gender, sexual orientation, or combinations of those three identities intersect in the lives of every organizational actor to form a barrier, constraint, or opportunity. Dipboye, Smith, and Howell (1994) wrote: "Employees who are dissimilar to potential mentors on sex, race, and other personal characteristics may have less opportunity to be mentored than those who fit the mold" (p. 503). For women and non-Whites in organizations, breaking into the "good old boys club" or attempting to access certain networks is an exercise in futility because they lack access and similar characteristics to the dominant group (Ibarra, 1993). This research is an attempt to understand how public relations practitioners of different races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations experience barriers and constraints to organizational power, how practitioners challenge and negotiate any constraints resulting from organizational power,

and to understand how practitioners make use opportunities to obtain organizational power. I did this by examining how practitioners make meaning of their experiences through the concepts of requisite variety, tokenism, and stigma.

With regard to the practice of public relations, this research on identity and power had several implications. My research added depth to the body of knowledge about the career lives and experiences of minority practitioners. According to the 2005 *PR Week Diversity Survey*, 80.3% and 80.6% of practitioners in U.S.-based agency and corporate staff positions were White. This type of environment can lead to exclusionary practices such as tokenism and pigeonholing. One of the points made by the survey was to provide an inviting and comfortable workplace for minority employees. In that same article, a senior-level minority practitioner commented that agencies and corporations can do that by looking at the practitioners' skills rather than skin color, accent, or cultural identity when staffing an account: "Practitioners should have communications experience in a particular cultural realm but not necessarily be from that cultural background when they are working on a targeted account" (*Diversity Survey*, 2005, p. 16).

This dissertation is valuable to the agencies and corporations in the field because of its exploration of how identity and power intersect in public relations practice and how they may make a difference on how practitioners interact with the dominant coalition. How practitioners approach their everyday duties as a spokesperson, as a public information officer, or as an account executive may be affected by their race, gender, and sexual orientation and because of the circuitous routes the individual must take to interact with management and even publics. The interactions between identity and power—or the lack of power in organizations—may impact how satisfied minority practitioners are with

their careers. Knowing and understanding what keeps racial and sexual minority practitioners satisfied in their careers is beneficial to the field of public relations because of the amount of time, attention, effort, and money dedicated to recruiting and retaining a diverse pool of candidates to agencies and corporations. For practitioners themselves, this research is valuable. It is an opportunity to give practitioners guidance and advice about obtaining power and navigating organizational structures. This research provided details about the strategies one can use to work with and work around the dominant coalition to achieve certain goals.

Outline of the Dissertation

The second chapter of this dissertation is the conceptualization chapter, and it reviews the major theoretical streams framing this research. These theories and areas of interest include the Excellence Theory (J. Grunig, 1992; L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002); power (Lukes, 2005; Bacharach & Baratz, 1962; Dahl, 1957; Foucault, 1978); racism (e.g., Omi & Winant, 1994; Essed, 1991); heterosexism (e.g., Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Herek, 1984, 1993); and stigma (e.g., Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Dovidio, Major, & Crocker, 2000; Goffman, 1963). Chapter two forms the theoretical basis for my research and will be referenced throughout the remainder of this dissertation. The third chapter is the methodology chapter, and it details my rationale for choosing qualitative methodology and in-depth interviews and the methods used for the study. The fourth chapter is the compilation of results; the chapter is organized around the three research questions. Practitioners of various and multiple identities encountered separate issues of discrimination in the workplace and occasionally encountered several barriers or processes at once. In response to the second research question about the practitioners'

constructions and meanings of power, practitioner views of power reflected a range of viewpoints. These views included having access to knowledge, access and control of financial resources, having and maintaining a foothold in the dominant coalition, and holding a position of stature in the organization. The definitions and descriptions offered by the practitioners reflected their experiences in organizations and work settings—both current and former workplaces. Personal influences and the standard managerial fare regarding managerial and leadership definitions merged together in the practitioners' words. Power emanated from individual and collective resources based in identity and from organizational sources. In reaction to these organizational barriers, practitioners resisted the structures and enacted countermeasures. To perceived and real organizational challenges, practitioners responded in a variety of ways. These responses were both organizational and interpersonal responses, and the participants depended upon collective identity resources, self-motivators, and organizational goals to inspire them and push them beyond the constraints and barriers. The resources mentioned by practitioners were the options traditionally mentioned in the literature. The fifth chapter concludes this dissertation with conclusions, limitations, and implications. The results also raised important insights about the assumed gendered, raced, and heterocentric identity of the public relations function in the organization and how the assumed individual achieves power in the organization. The appendices include the recruitment materials, IRB forms, and interview protocol.

Chapter Two: Conceptualization

The purpose of this dissertation research was to understand how minority public relations practitioners negotiate power in organizations, how identity influences organizational power, and what strategies practitioners use to enhance organizational power. In this chapter, I will explicate literature and theory that discusses public relations management and theory, power and empowerment, identity and intersectionality, diversity in public relations, types of discrimination, such as heterosexism and racism, and consequences of these types of discrimination. To frame this research, I used research from public relations, organizational management, sociology, and psychology.

Public Relations

Definition of Public Relations

There are several conceptual definitions of public relations. J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) defined it as "the management of communication between an organization and its public" (p. 7). Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2000) defined the practice to include management-level responsibilities and the goal of negotiating relationships. To these authors, public relations is "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (p. 6). Miller (1989) proposed that public relations is a process controlling symbols in the environment: "Specifically, public relations serves a definitional label for the process of attempting to exert symbolic control over evaluative predispositions ('attitudes,' 'images,' etc.) and subsequent behaviors of relevant publics or clienteles" (p. 47). Botan (1989) considered public relations an interchange between an organization and its publics. For Botan, public relations is a process "using

communication to exchange meaning between organizations and their publics" (p. 100).

For this research, I will use the definition created by J. E. Grunig and Hunt (1984). The J. E. Grunig and Hunt definition is broad, allowing me to select practitioners who are engaged in relationship management and consensus-building activities and who are also involved in the design, writing, and technical activities of the job.

Theory of Excellence in Public Relations

In 1985, the International Association of Business Communicators Foundation commissioned the Excellence project. Headed by J. E. Grunig, the purpose of the research project was twofold: to identify the characteristics of an excellent communication department and to understand how excellent public relations makes organizations effective (J. E. Grunig, 1992). In this decade-long study, the authors distinguished 14 characteristics of excellent public relations departments. The characteristics of importance for my research are the organization's commitment and support of diversity and the dominant coalition, those who make the decisions for the organization.

Organization of the function. According to the Excellence Theory, the public relations department (1) should have access to management decision making, (2) should be an integrated unit, and (3) should have a flexible, dynamic horizontal structure (L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). The ideal public relations function should be centralized within one department rather than scattered throughout the organization. Dozier and L. A. Grunig (1992) considered the integration of all public relations departments and functions essential to the efficient and effective organization of public relations. "Only within such a structure does the practitioner have the autonomy and mandate to define publics and channels of communication dynamically. Only in such a

setting can the practitioner focus on genuine strategic problem solving rather than routinized communicating" (Dozier & L. A. Grunig, 1992, p. 402).

Public Relations Practitioners and Organizational Roles. The idea of roles as defining the expected, everyday activities associated with a particular position has intrigued many researchers in the fields of organizational communication and public relations. The daily patterns of behaviors and actions of those involved in the public relations function are identified by the four public relations roles conceptualized by Broom and Dozier (Broom & Smith, 1978, 1979; Broom, 1982; Dozier, 1986; Dozier & Broom, 1995). Each member of an organization is directly associated with a set of interdependent and interrelated activities and behaviors. Those recurring patterns comprised an individual's role in the organization. While roles outline and guide the actions of individuals, those actions must mesh with the repetitive activities of others to yield predictable results (Dozier, 1992; Katz & Kahn, 1978).

First devised by Broom and Smith (1978, 1979), the four theoretical roles are expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem solving process facilitator, and communication technician. Those in the expert prescriber role serve as management's consultants on public relations issues and questions. The communication facilitator acts as the "go-between," facilitating the flow of information between the organization and its publics and working to ensure accurate and smooth dialogue. The problem-solving facilitator works in careful deliberation and discussion with management to resolve public relations problems. In this role, the practitioners help management to think systematically through situations (Kelleher, 2000). The communication technician provides technical services such as graphic design and artistry, event planning, and publicity writing to the

organization and allows management to make critical decisions and designate which organizational communication tactics and strategies to use.

Since the 1980s, the roles research has been an important focus for public relations research. L. A. Grunig, Toth, and Hon (2001) wrote, "From its inception, roles research has chronicled what public relations people do, primarily based on a set of role categories" (p. 221). Because roles define the day-to-day experiences of public relations practitioners, roles are useful descriptors and guides of what individuals do inside organizations (Dozier, 1992). Yet, the roles research stretched beyond that. "They are powerful theoretical and empirical links between various concepts in a model of the public relations function" (Dozier, 1992, p. 334-335). The roles have been linked to gender and career advancement, salaries, models of public relations that are used by the organization, and the decision-making roles of managers (Dozier, 1992; L. A. Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001; L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

Each role carries different performance responsibilities, and Broom and Dozier (1986) noted that practitioners will embody each role. Later, Dozier (1992) recommended the establishment and use of the manager-technician typology, and the rationale he provided for the reduction of the four practitioner roles was simple. The manager and the technician roles were two distinct and uncorrelated concepts that emerged continually from each collected data set. The collapsing of the roles has provided scholars with "a parsimonious way to operationalize roles and test relations with antecedent and consequential constructs" (p. 334).

Although previous research indicated that public relations practitioners lacked strong professional role expectations and did not share common definitions of their jobs,

theorists have provided a cache of research on the four roles (Kelleher, 2000; Dozier, 1992). According to Kelleher (2000), the roles research is "one of the most robust descriptive concepts in the field of public relations" (p. 2).

The restructuring of the roles created a typology, benefiting some practitioners and disadvantaging others. According to L. A. Grunig, Toth, and Hon (2001), the typology promoted "a worldview of a two-tier career ladder in public relations wherein practitioners ascend from the technician to the managerial role" (p. 223). Creedon (1991) challenged the traditional typology and stated the continued emphasis of the manager over technician had created a "hierarchy of two seemingly dissimilar roles—the manager who decides policy and the technician who implements 'his' policies" (p. 79).

Dominant Coalition. As the "inner circle" or "the insiders" running the organization, the dominant coalition is the powerful group within the organization that makes the decisions and charts the organization's strategies (J. E. Grunig, 1992; White & Dozier, 1992). L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, and Dozier (2002) formally defined the dominant coalition as "the group of individuals within the organization who have the power to determine its mission and goals. They are the top managers who 'run the organization'" (p. 141).

Dominant coalitions can be a prescribed network or emergent network. A prescribed network is a formally structured group with defined and specific relationships between organizational actors and the organizational functions that must achieve set tasks (Ibarra, 1993). The informal network emerges from people gathering together to meet their own needs or from members who seek each other out to actualize personal interests. Because these relationships are being enacted and supported in the workplace, the interests

of the actors may be braided to prescribed relationships in the organization. Because managers move and span outside their departmental boundaries, cooperating with other functional areas to achieve organizational goals, "emergent networks of relationships tend to be much broader than formal networks" (Ibarra, 1993, p. 58).

According to the Excellence Theory, the communication manager must be a member of the dominant coalition or have access to the dominant coalition. Having a seat at the table or access to the board is the achievement of power for the public relations practitioner personally or the public relations department organizationally. The department is able to access and mobilize resources and gain credibility. The communication manager has the ability and the authority to make autonomous decisions. He or she is an empowered practitioner who has the ability to act as an independent strategist for the good of the organization while cooperating with the heads of other departments (L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

J. E. Grunig (1992) discussed the value of access to the dominant coalition and membership in this group for practitioners. If the public relations department is considered an extension of the chairperson or CEO and if the department's senior officer is a trusted and indispensable advisor, then the access to the dominant coalition should be automatic. According to J. E. Grunig, the public relations practitioner must be a member of the organization's informal yet influential power network for any communication endeavor to succeed. To have the opportunity to influence change and direct relationships with external and internal publics are duties within the abilities of a practitioner. If the practitioner receives admittance into the dominant coalition and receives a level of respect

within the organization's dominant coalition, then those abilities will be afforded to the practitioner and, hence, to public relations department or office.

Public relations managers also obtain access to the dominant coalition by contributing to organizational effectiveness and by demonstrating knowledge of the two-way models, participating in strategic decision-making, educating themselves continuously about new trends in the industry and in the public relations profession, and having practical "hands-on" experience. The manager must be knowledgeable about the managerial aspects of the job. He or she must be willing to associate with professional organizations to enhance his or her knowledge and professional skills and expand his or her base of professional contacts. As Gordon and Kelly (1999) put forth, "Instead of mastering the production of techniques, such as news releases, publications, and speakers bureaus, practitioners should gain expertise in preparing programming and business plans that are organized by goals and measurable objectives in strategy-based budgets" (p. 161).

Yet, access to the dominant coalition is not always possible. The condition of powerlessness noted by Kanter (1977) is common among organizational members who do not control their own destiny and are squeezed by the demands of those above and below them. "Their sense of lack of control above is heightened by its contrast with demands of an accountable authority position: that they mobilize others in the interests of a task they may have had little part in shaping, to produce results they may have had little part in defining" (p. 186). One reason for entering the dominant coalition is to avoid bureaucracy. Without this access and ability, "People without sponsors, without peer connections, or without promising subordinates remained in the situation of bureaucratic dependency on formal procedures, routine allocation of rewards, communication that flowed through a

multi-layered chain of command, and decisions that must penetrate... 'innumerable veto barriers'" (p. 188).

The dominant coalition also has the power to replace people within the public relation function. If the practitioner fails to enact the manager's role and if the organization's management does not consider public relations to be a powerful force, then a power vacuum exists within the department. This absence of leadership can lead to encroachment or "the assignment of nonpublic relations professionals to manage the public relations function" (Lauzen, 1992, p. 61). In her research on encroachment and power, Lauzen found that manager role enactment, along with formal education in public relations and specialized skills, protected the public relations function from an invasion and from the dominant coalition from believing the public relations department was weak and shallow.

Public Relations Practitioners as Organizational Activists

Many scholars have examined the role of practitioners, critiquing the established roles as a limiting binary and constructing new roles such as the organizational activist. The in-house or organizational activist, a role proposed by Holtzhausen (2000), Holtzhausen and Voto (2002), and Holtzhausen, Petersen, and Tindall (2003), is a postmodern conceptualization of the practitioner in an institutionalized role. Practitioners act as "change agents, serve as the conscience of the organization, and give voice to those without power in their relationship within the organization" (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 60). For practitioners who engaged in such efforts, according to Holtzhausen, they wanted to see a change happen in the institution and became boundary spanners. Holtzhausen and Voto (2002) noted, "Practitioners as boundary spanners will inevitably

be more in touch with the societal and cultural environment of organizations and will therefore be more susceptible to these changes than most others" (p. 77).

The organizational activist combines activist behavior and boundary spanning, clashing with the traditional pedagogy and epistemology of public relations (cf. Karlberg, 1996; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; Holtzhausen, 2000). Dozier and Lauzen (2000) commented that public relations research on activism is driven by managerial concerns: "Specifically, activism is largely studied by public relations scholars from the perspective of organizations with pockets deep enough to hire professional public relations practitioners" (p. 8). Traditionally, activists are viewed as agents instigating and agitating from outside the organization, and activism is not seen as something that occurs within the organizational public relations function. Zald and Berger (1978) issued the reminder that social movements can take place within institutions; activism does not always need to target the nation-state. Hodson (1996) argued that the workplace is a "contested terrain": "Resistance, struggle, and effort bargaining are important components of everyday life in the workplace" (p. 719). Practitioners should be able to gain "a new understanding of the potential for resistance to unfair and unethical work environments" (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 79).

Power and Empowerment

Concept of Organizational Power

Power is derived from the French word "pouvoir," which can alternate as the noun "power" and the verb "to be able" (Mintzberg, 1983). Organizational theorists interested in the study of power have created theories explaining how organizations function and how those within organizations achieve power. When one has power in organizations, he or she

can get things accomplished and effect outcomes and decisions. To Kanter (1977), power was "the ability to do" (p. 166). For this dissertation, I defined power from concepts developed by Lukes (2005) and Foucault (1978). Lukes defined power as "A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests" (p. 37). Lukes proposed that effective use of power led to the prevention of conflict. According to Gaventa and Cornwall (2001), "The powerful may do so not only by influencing who acts upon recognized grievances and awareness of such grievances" (p. 71). The powerful influence, produce, and control knowledge and information, thus influencing ideologies and consciousness (Lukes, 2005; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001). Foucault (1978) considered power as domination of the body and social interaction. A dynamic and circulatory entity, power is mediated by social relationships (Rouse, 1994). How power is configured or aligned in these relationships depends upon one actor's activity and the responsive actions and orientations of others. According to Wartenberg (1994):

A field of social agents can constitute an alignment in regard to a social agent if and only if, first of all, their actions in regard to that agent are coordinated in a certain manner. **To be an alignment**, however, the coordinated practices of these social agents need to be comprehensive enough that the social agent facing the alignment encounters that alignment as having control over certain things she might need or desire. (p. 106)

Organizational actors can exercise power unwittingly, unintentionally, and in a manner contrary to what the original action meant (Rouse, 1994).

Definitions of organizational power typically involve a discussion of organizational politics. Power and politics are seen as two factors that combine in any

decision-making process (Hatch, 1998; Pfeffer, 1981). Daft (2001) considered organizational politics as the use of force or the potential to influence decisions. Mintzberg (1983) treated politics as a subset of organizational power, calling politics "ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, and above all, in the technical sense—illegitimate-sanctioned by neither formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise (though it may exploit any one of these)" (p. 172).

Dimensions of Power

There are many approaches and definitions of power in the scholarly and popular management literature. With the multiple meanings to a complex concept, Kanter (1977) described the word power as a "loaded term. Its connotations tend to be more negative than positive" (p. 166).

One of the most cited definitions of power comes from Dahl. In 1957, he wrote, "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (p. 203). Power exists not within the individual actors (A or B) but in the interaction between the actors (Hatch, 1996; Bacharach & Lawler, 1980). Power is interactive, and "the actors take each other into account, that one actor tries to direct the other and that they are operating in a common situation" (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980, p. 17). Power is conceived as coercion or the power one has over another.

In contrast, Bacharach and Baratz (1962) offered another definition of power, one that was more two-dimensional than previous constructions and offered a glimpse of power rarely discussed. Known as the two faces of power, the authors described power as an exercise or achievement when the following occurs:

A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences. (p. 948)

Bacharach and Baratz considered things that are not discussed openly, the acts of power that are not revealed in a direct manner (Hatch, 1996). Hatch considered the hidden face of power a meaningful perspective for organizational scholars and students to consider.

Hatch wrote:

In organizations operating with strict hierarchy, many issues are silenced by the charge of being irrelevant to the concerns of the firms, which have tended until recently to be focused heavily on profitability and efficiency. As organizations become more diverse and pluralistic, there is evidence that issues formerly defined by higher levels of authority as outside the realm of the organization's interests are being put forward as critical. (p. 291)

Several assumptions create the context for the critical examination of power. First, mainstream definitions or conceptualizations of power are enacted between social actors who are assumed to have equal footing in terms of resources, status, position, and prestige (Lukes, 1974/2005). Second, there is an explicit focus on observable conflict and explicit decision-making. Third, these approaches ignore sociohistorical power imbalances. Lukes

(1974/2005) enriched the critique of power, proposing a three-dimensional view of power. Lukes claimed that previous definitions of power were individualistic and that these definitions associated power with actual, observable conflict. He defined power as “A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests” (p. 37). The complexity of power in Lukes' definition lies in the interdependence between the two subjects and the acknowledgement of a power structure.

Beyond the more orthodox and traditional applications of power, Foucault (1978) asserted that power existed within the structural relationships. As Garland (1990) wrote, "In this sense, power operates 'through' individuals rather than 'against' them and helps constitute the individual who is at the same time its vehicle" (p. 138). Power is not possessed, created, maintained, or obtained by those in the relationship. Power is a localized, ever-changing, and constant facet of life. Foucault (1978) argued that "power is everywhere not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (p. 93).

Empowerment

An easily and often-carelessly used term that is tossed and bandied about in conversation, empowerment is a word lacking a precise definition. Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined empowerment as “the process by which a leader or manager shares his or her power with subordinates” (p. 473). Quinn (1999) looked upon empowerment as “management practice of allowing to workers, or indeed imposing on workers, more problem-solving discretion” (p. 24). Potterfield (1999) believed the word empowerment was overused, murky, and ill-defined; the term had limited capability because it lacked specific theoretical underpinning and dimensions. Vincenti (1993) claimed that for both

power and empowerment, precise understandings were elusive because “meanings and related terms such as influence, control and domination are uncertain, shifting, and overlapping” (p. 9). For Conger and Kanungo (1988), theorists treated empowerment “as a set of managerial techniques and have not paid sufficient attention to its nature or the processes underlying the construct” (p. 471); there were multiple techniques and processes associated with empowerment: participative management, delegation, decentralized decision-making, quality circles, total quality management, management by objective. Basically, the term has evolved to mean power sharing.

The concept of empowerment has been examined from multiple academic and professional disciplines and with different treatments. As Potterfield (1999) noted, “While acknowledging empowerment’s deep cultural roots, it is important to note that the term has very different meanings depending upon whether it is being used by a social activist or by a business leader” (p. 45). One strain of authors and practitioners ground their conceptual knowledge and theoretical base in the work of Paulo Friere (1973). Friere developed the “pedagogy of the oppressed” while working with literacy programs in the *favelas* of Brazil. Empowerment in this social action sense is one in which people obtain the tools and skills necessary to gain control over the actions and decisions that impact their lives (Koelen & Lindstrom, 2005). Other scholars take a more managerial and psychological perspective to empowerment. Spreitzer (1992) argued that one is psychologically empowered when he or she finds meaning in his or her organizational role, feels efficacious regarding his or her ability to perform his or her role, has a sense of determination, and has a sense of control over desired outcomes, believing that he or she can impact the greater good or larger world (Potterfield, 1999). “These four dimensions

combine to form an overall feeling of ‘psychological empowerment,’ a ‘sense of meaning associated with [his or her] role and ... a sense of control over [his or her] role’ (Spreitzer, 1992, p. 26). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) wrote that there are three key interpretive acts relevant to psychological empowerment—attribution, evaluation, and envisioning.

With these perspectives, the focus is at the microlevel and concentrated within the organizational setting, looking at “the individual employee’s subjective experience of being empowered” (p. 49). Thus, the difference between the two is explicated by Potterfield (1999):

Specifically, in the social action realm, empowerment refers to the recognition by an oppressed or marginalized group that they have some degree of power collectively to improve their conditions. In the realm of business management, the term empowerment refers to practices whereby corporate leaders choose to give more decision-making power to lower-level employees. Thus, in corporate settings, empowerment is something that powerful people give to less powerful people, whereas in the social action field, empowerment is something that marginalized or oppressed people develop within themselves as they struggle to improve their lives (p. 45).

In relationship to power, empowerment is seen as either a countermeasure or as a synonym. Empowerment can allow people greater discretionary capability and responsibility, yet the power struggle can be viewed two ways as a counterbalance to an authoritarian organization or an imposition on the workers to accept and acknowledge some ways of the power above and over them. According to Quinn,

Perhaps it is that the word empowerment is itself equivocal. On the one hand empowerment suggests the assertion or taking of power by the individual or group. It represents the victory of autonomy and freedom over repression and coercion. On the other hand, however, empowerment suggests the tolerance, granting or imposition of power to the individual or group by some external agent. In accepting some empowerment the empowered might be seen as recognising and acquiescing to the power of those above. These two perspectives on empowerment, it can be argued, raise quite different ethical questions. (p. 23)

Power in Public Relations

The theoretical basis of the Excellence Theory rests upon the strategic-contingencies and power-control perspectives (Pfeffer, 1981; Crozier, 1964; J. E. Grunig, 1992; L. A. Grunig, 1992). The structure of the public relations department in relation to the dominant coalition is explained by the power-control theory, and the strategic-contingencies theory explains how public relations managers attain power through problem solving, knowledge, information management, and boundary spanning. Power in public relations is derived from its role and function in the organization. L. A. Grunig (1992) linked the management and decision-making responsibilities of public relations and the department's inclusion in the dominant coalition as fundamental to the accumulation and maintenance of power. L. A. Grunig (1992) considered power as personal and departmental attributes. The public relations unit and the practitioner should be critical to the organization's functioning because of the boundary spanning

responsibility, the expertise in communication strategy, and the ability to make discretionary, autonomous decisions.

The influence of the dominant coalition specifically can be a detriment or an enhancement to the public relations function. According to Plowman (1995), although membership in the dominant coalition allowed practitioners to engage in proactive problem solving, the practitioners still did not dictate how the function was practiced. The preferences of the dominant coalition ordained how public relations was practiced and, in Plowman's study, that was a two-way mixed motive model. Other scholars such as Holtzhausen and Voto (2000), Berger (2005), and Spicer (1997) have looked at the dark side of power in public relations, and the relationship between public relations practitioners and the dominant coalition has been a point of contention for some theorists.

Berger (2005) challenged the basic assumptions in public relations theory, asserting that it ignored power relations and processes. According to Berger, "Power is not something 'out there' beyond the practice but instead constitutive of practice in shifting relations of power that both constrain and create opportunities for choices and actions. Power ebbs and flows and moves through various venues and moments of decision making so that practice seems inevitably bound up in relations of power" (p. 23). In his qualitative study of practitioners, Berger identified power constraints in the practice of public relations and clarified practitioner activism in relation to organizational dominance. Unsanctioned resistance or power to relations are the "approaches, processes, and resources that public relations managers (and others) may use to counter or to resist" (p. 18). Practitioners work outside of the system in ways that the organization's leaders see as unacceptable; these challenges to the organization may include whistle-blowing,

association-level activism, covert actions such as leaks, and the creation of alternative interpretations of organizational events (Berger, 2005). These radical acts of organizational activism could challenge a practitioner's organizational allegiances, jeopardize their careers, and create ethical quandaries.

Holtzhausen and Voto (2002) found that those public relations practitioners lacking the support of the dominant coalition were still powerful in the organization. Instead of relying upon their positional power or their authority, the practitioners used other skills to create and build their power networks. "These practitioners relied on personal characteristics, relationship building, expertise, and opportunity to gain power" (p. 78). The goal of the practitioners who act as activists and act outside of the dominant coalition was to privilege and include the voices of the marginalized and those of the employees. More so than any one skill or tactic, the practitioners relied on inner personal power or biopower (Foucault, 1988, as cited in Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002) to resist the status quo of the organization. Spicer (1997) observed the emotional and physical toll one could endure as a worker in organizations and as a public relations practitioner. Calling this toll "workplace violence," Spicer argued that the array of embarrassments one endures in the workplace stemmed from the paradox of organizational life. He wrote, "Organizations seek to insure and promote individual autonomy and creativity while, at the same time, attempt to limit that autonomy and creativity through the perceived need for organizational control and coordination" (p. 78-79).

Identity and Intersectionality

Identity

Brewer and Gardner (1996) presented levels of self-representation and self-construal on social self. At the first level of analysis is the individual or the personal self. The personal self is the “aspects of the self-concepts that differentiate the self from all others” (Brewer & Gardner, 1996, p. 83). The second level is the interpersonal level, where the relational self is examined. The relational concept is “the self-concept derived from connections and role relationships with significant others” (p. 84). At the third level is the group level, where the collective self is placed under observation or study. Brewer and Gardner argued that social identity or self-category is the closest concept to collective identity that researchers could study. In this research, I looked at the social identities of practitioners in organizations.

Social identity, rather than personal identity, or the idiosyncratic attributes or characteristics of an individual such as bodily features, interests, or abilities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), is the method that people use to classify themselves and others in the social world. Social identity is the relational “aspects of the self-concept that reflect assimilation to others or significant social groups” (p. 83). The categories that people use as boundaries defining who is inside or outside of select grouping depend upon “prototypical characteristics abstracted from the members” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 20). An individual's social identity is derived from group membership; it radiates from the idea of “oneness with or belonging to human aggregate” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21). According to Owens (2003), social identity stems from the “categories to which individuals are socially recognized as belonging. It is one of their labels. The world encounters the individual—and the individual the world—in varying categorical terms” (p. 224). Tajfel (1981) defined social identity as:

that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [*sic*] knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership....[T]he assumption is made that, however, rich and complex may be the individuals' view of themselves in relation to their surrounding world...*some* aspects of that view are contributed by the membership of certain social groups or categories. Some of these memberships are more salient than others; and some may vary in salience in time as a function of a variety of social situations. (p. 255, emphases in original)

Therefore, people can define who they are, accepting or rejecting the social labels that groups or society places on them (Owens, 2003). Avowed and ascribed identities are also taken under consideration in this dissertation.¹ Ascribed identities are those socially constructed identities tagged to an individual upon birth (Jenkins, 1996). Avowed identities are accumulated over one's lifetime, emerge from things such as career choices and organizational affiliations, and "are generally—although not necessarily—the outcome of a degree of self-direction" (p. 142). For this work, I used Tajfel's interpretation of social identity. For avowed and ascribed identities, I used the definitions provided by Jenkins (1996) and Sha (1995), listed earlier.

Intersectionality

Gender, race, and sexual orientation do not exist in a vacuum separated from each other. They simultaneously occur with each other and have an impact upon each other as they combine to form one's identity. As Fletcher and Ely (2003) noted, "We all inhabit,

enact, and respond to many different social identities simultaneously. Similarly, organizations are not only gendered, they reflect and reinforce divisions along other axes of difference as well. These divisions operate simultaneously to create interlocking systems of power” (p. 7).

Intersectionality is the assumption that race, gender, class, and sexual orientation are salient characteristics that shadow individuals in every interaction (Weber, 2001; Landry, in press; Zinn & Dill, 1996; Collins, 1993, 2000; Brewer, 1993; King, 1988). Race, gender, class, and sexual orientation are dynamic, simultaneous social operations. The concept of simultaneous relationships introduces the idea of multiplicative relationships. Instead of viewing race, gender, class, and sexual orientation as simple and stackable forms of identity or social processes, they are considered more complex.

The idea of multiplicative relationships assumes that the identities are interactive and integrated (King, 1988). The effect of race and gender are comingled, "generated by the combination of the two" (Landry, in press). Some scholars do not see the relevance of all characteristics to every situation. In one situation, a certain factor may trump or be more salient than another. King (1988) made the point that the context of the situation matters, "depending on the particular aspect of our lives under consideration and the reference groups to whom we [Black women] are compared" (p. 22). Zinn and Dill (1996) noted, "People experience race, class, gender, and sexuality differently depending upon their social location in the structures of race, gender, and sexuality" (p. 326-327). West and Fenstermaker (1995) argued that race, gender, and class are continuous and ongoing accomplishments in the daily lives of individuals. Understanding the relevance of these

¹ Some authors use achieved or acquired identity (Jenkins, 1996) rather than avowed identity to describe the same concept. Following Sha (1995) and L. A. Grunig, Toth and Hon (2001), I will be consistent with the

three dynamic processes and how they impact an individual's life cannot be understood unless a researcher acknowledges and understands the context in which they are achieved and accomplished (West & Fenstermaker, 1995). According to the authors, "While sex category, race category, and class category are potentially omnirelevant to social life, individuals inhabit many different identities, and these may be stressed or muted, depending on the situation" (p. 30). In contrast to the prevailing sentiments, Collins (1993) recognized that race, gender, class, and sexual orientation may still be relevant in a situation and that there still may be potential for all three characteristics at one time:

Race, class and gender may all structure a situation but may not be equally visible and/or important in people's self-definitions....This recognition that one category may have salience over another for a given time and place does not minimize the theoretical importance of assuming that race, class and gender as categories of analysis structure all relationships (p. 560-561).

Diversity

For some scholars, diversity is considered a net to capture all social identities (Brewer, 1995). Researchers have examined various dimensions of diversity, identifying and explicating all manner of differences in the workplace to include gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, nationality, religion, organizational teams, educational background and tenure, and differences in individual characteristics (Ely & Foldy, 2003). Triandis (1995) considered diversity a socially constructed phenomenon bounded by history and culture. In heterogeneous societies and cultures where power relationships are in flux, diversity will always be considered important. Cox (1994) equated cultural

diversity with representation of different cultural groups in a social system; Cox focused particularly on racioethnic, gender, and nationality because these markers of identity are constant. Hays-Thomas (2004) considered that, in an organizational setting, diversity was any differences among employees that may affect an individual's progress or acceptance.

Milikens and Martins (1996) classified diversity into two separate clusters: observable attributes and underlying attributes. The observable attributes are the "readily detectable" qualities an individual possesses such as race, ethnicity, age, ability, or gender. The underlying or nonobservable attributes are those qualities that are not visible to the naked eye—things such as education, technical ability, functional background, socioeconomic background, organizational tenure, or values. The authors differentiated between the two groups because of prejudice and stigma that emerge with visible identity: "When differences between people are visible, they are particularly likely to evoke responses that are due to biases, prejudices, or stereotypes" (p. 404). Jackson and Ruderman (1995) had a clear classification for diversity: demographic, psychological, and organizational. Demographic diversity is based on gender, ethnicity, and age. Psychological diversity is defined as the variety of values, beliefs, and knowledge. Organizational diversity is based on tenure, occupation, and hierarchical level.

These approaches to diversity are not without criticism. The broad and narrow views of diversity espoused by Jackson and Ruderman (1995) and later by Milikens and Martins (1996) were problematic for Nkomo (1995). Nkomo believed both approaches failed to capture the complexity and subtleties of diversity. The narrow definition limited and restricted identity to race, gender and other cultural categories (Nkomo, 1995). The broader view assumes that all differences among people are benign; differences are

reduced or eradicated through this approach. Nkomo argued for a more layered, nuanced approach to diversity research, one that examines the multiple and intersecting identities that people experience: "Race and gender can interact with each other as well as with other aspects of identity, including organizational function, personality, and cognitive style" (p. 249).

For the purposes of this research, I used Milikens and Martins' (1996) taxonomy of diversity as my definition of diversity because this definition addressed stigma and prejudice. I used the definitions as a strategy to delineate the various social locations of the practitioners situated in my sample. Although it is presented as a simple dichotomy, there is room to identify a person as having multiple observable and nonobservable attributes. It is important to acknowledge differences and to understand where people are located in the hierarchies of power and privilege. However, I took Nkomo's (1995) critique regarding the interaction of race and gender seriously. I extended the critique to embrace other dimensions of social identity and will attempt to use interactional analysis to examine why and how different social locations impact a person's experience.

Concept of requisite variety. Requisite variety rests on the premise of equivocality or "the relative level of complexity, lack of predictability, and ambiguity one has in responding to a particular event" (Kreps, 1994). The environment in which the organization's public relations practitioners and other managers may encounter a low or high equivocal event is an enacted environment (Kreps, 1994; Hatch, 1994; Weick, 1979). As public practitioners encounter phenomenon, they act and make it real through the process of reification: They speak and create an event or process into existence. As Weick stated, "managers construct, rearrange, single out, and demolish many 'objective' features

of their surroundings. When people act they unrandomize variables, insert vestiges of orderliness, and literally create their own constraints" (p. 243). Regarding equivocality, practitioners must interpret the situation, make sense of the surrounding environment, settle on the event's level of equivocality, and determine and conclude what the proper organizational response should be. As Kreps (1994) noted, "equivocality is not merely a characteristic of an event...but rather a characteristic of the individual's ability to perceive and respond to the event" (p. 129).

The principle of requisite variety states that the organizational response must match the perceived equivocality in the environment (Kreps, 1994; Weick, 1979). Similar to Weick's concept of requisite variety is Ashby's law of requisite variety, where variety is the measure of the system's complexity and the organization's control of the environment is paramount. The law stated, "Only variety in R can force down the variety due to D; only variety can destroy variety" (Emery, 1969, p. 110). Beer (1981) softened Ashby's statement, writing the following: "Control can be obtained only if the variety of the controller is at least as great as the variety of the situation to be controlled" (Beer, 1981, p. 41). The Excellence theory's concept of diversity is based on Weick's (1979) principle of requisite variety. As L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, and Dozier (2001) explained, requisite variety is the notion that organizations should have as much difference and variety internally as exists in the organization's external environment and among their stakeholders. For purposes of this work, I followed Weick's definition because it synthesizes the earlier definitions provided by Emery (1969) and Beer (1981). Also, Weick's definition is used because this definition is the basis for diversity in the

Excellence study and previous researchers have used it when exploring diversity in public relations (e.g., Sha & Ford, 2006).

The Excellence theory's concept of diversity is based on Weick's (1979) principle of requisite variety. As L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, and Dozier (2001) explained, requisite variety is the notion that organizations should have as much difference and variety internally as exists in the organization's external environment and among their stakeholders. Regarding requisite variety, Dozier, L. A. Grunig, and J. E. Grunig (1995) wrote, "The variety within provides a basis for building mutually beneficial relationships with diverse people and groups outside the organization. Without such requisite variety, ...misunderstandings occur" (p. 4).

In the context of the Excellence Theory, the concept of requisite variety is essential to the promise and need for diversity in public relations. L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, and Ehling (1992) expressed the need for racial diversity as an effort to strengthen relationships with publics and better survey the environment:

If, for example, an organization affects or could be affected by minority publics, it probably will not recognize those stakeholders as part of the environment if all the public relations practitioners are White. Or, White practitioners may not recognize that diverse publics do not consider the organization to be legitimate – one of the attributes of relationships (p. 84).

The idea of requisite variety and its attached diversity tenet in the Excellence theory is limited both theoretically and practically. As Sha and Ford (2007) noted, the Excellence Theory's formulation of requisite variety and diversity is limited to two types. The emphasis of the Excellence Theory's diversity was the separate consideration of gender

and racioethnicity equity. The possibilities of multiple identities or other minorities outside of racial and gendered practitioners were not taken into account at that time. For the field to succeed and become excellent, "all of us must learn to consider multiple diversities as constituting integral and integrated aspects of the field rather than as 'Others' that are somehow different and separate from 'mainstream' public relations" (Sha & Ford, 2007, p. 383).

The concept of requisite variety in the Excellence Theory does not take into account the avowed or ascribed identity of the individual practitioner. Avowed identity is the cultural or ethnic associations an individual person declares, and ascribed identity is the associations placed upon an individual because of appearance (Sha, 1995). If a practitioner is hired to communicate to a specific minority public based upon appearance or another ascribed identity, his or her avowed identities may not match the cultural fit needed for specific accounts, stopping his or her advancement in the public relations role. Also, research in multicultural communication strategies has demonstrated that cultural similarity does not equate with sensitivity. Sheng (1995) concluded, "Membership in a specific group does not – by itself – determine the effectiveness of one communicator over others" (p. 205).

The Excellence Theory and other works looking at diversity in public relations do not take into account the confluence of multiple identities that occur within organizations. This is not uncommon in organizational scholarship where race, along with gender, has been written out of organizations (Allen, 2004; Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Nkomo, 1992). Exploring the dynamic of race in organizational scholarship, Nkomo (1992) found that race has been written about in "incomplete and inadequate ways" (p. 489). The production

of knowledge about organizations has treated and continues to treat these institutions as race-neutral. Nkomo acknowledged, "The study of race is an especially sensitive issue because scholars must not only be aware of how prevailing societal race relations influence their approach to the study of race, but they must also understand the effects of their own racial identity and experiences on their work" (Nkomo, 1992, p. 490). Because the majority of the Excellence Study was written by two White men and one White woman, the intersections of race and gender may have been subordinated due to lack of understanding and awareness regarding the stress and frustration some practitioners have regarding their status. The possibility that other identities may factor into how practitioners approach the workplace and how the organization ideology and culture shapes practitioners' identity was ignored but remain a key issue in public relations today.

Perceptions of the Glass Ceiling in Public Relations. As organizations recruit women into their ranks including positions of power in the public relations department, the organization hopes to select and retain the best individuals. Yet, the selection and recruitment process may not always equate to advancement and promotion. Many women have seen their advancing careers fizzle out and stall at the middle management level. They have hit "the glass ceiling."

The United States Department of Labor considers the glass ceiling as "those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management level positions" (Martin, 1991). The glass ceiling is a transparent but subtle barrier that prevents certain individuals in organizations from escalating into the management hierarchy (Morrison & Van Glinow, 1990; L. A. Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001). Several structural factors

contribute to placing the glass panes into the ceiling and play a role in women not advancing and being welcomed into upper management. According to Holvino (2003), Ragins and Sundstrom (1989), and L. A. Grunig, Toth, & Hon (2001), the lack of mentoring, sex stereotypes, selection and recruitment issues, and leadership perceptions of certain groups blend together to form the restraints that keep women out of management. Ragins and Sundstrom (1989) referred to these issues as the "obstacle course" in a woman's career development.

Among the earliest studies to examine the advancement issues for women in public relations were the Velvet Ghetto studies: *The Velvet Ghetto* (Cline, Toth, Turk, Walters, Johnson, & Smith, 1986) and *Beyond the Velvet Ghetto* (Toth & Cline, 1989).

Commissioned by the IABC Foundation, the latter study explored the effects of sex segregation in the publications, salary disparities, and employer bias in hiring. Also, the perceived impact of the increasing number of women entering the field was another theme explored in the research. The feminization and the shrinking potency of the field threatened and instilled fear in some practitioners who looked to other professions and careers as examples of what could happen to public relations. As the authors stated, "While 'women's professions' do have a meaningful role to play in society, they cannot achieve the kind of power essential to professional and personal effectiveness as can related professions with male majorities" (p. 1-3).

Public relations can be described as a feminized field. The meaning of feminization takes on a variety of interpretations and definitions within and outside of the field. In her study of women's ministerial roles and paths, Nesbitt (1997) defined feminization as an occupation defined by an increasing female population. Some scholars

in other academic areas have focused on linking “male flight” or the shortage of men (Wright & Jacobs, 1994) to the number of women employed in the profession to the abundance of women in the field. Reskin and Roos (1987) suggested that if an increasing ratio of women in a profession exceeds the field’s set threshold or “tipping point”, an adjustment happens: “an internal restructuring occurs in the amount of authority, prestige, or compensation than an occupation commands and in the jobs that constitute it” (p. 586).

Wrigley (2002) considered feminization in public relations a matter of numerical proportions. Although the number of women practicing public relations is increasing and cresting over the halfway mark, Wrigley declared there is not equal representation of women in management. Other public relations authors have echoed a similar sentiment, stating that there is a concentration of women in the technical rather than upper echelon, managerial ranks (Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001). Other scholars have referred to the increasing proportion of women in the field and the accompanying reduction in the social prestige, which in turn devalues the status of public relations as a managerial role and the remuneration of practitioners.

Beyond the numerical arguments, scholars have also argued that the feminization of the field extended to the activities within the workplace and the interpretation of those professional activities (Basten, 1997). Feminization is not just a shrinking pool of men and a swell of women in the workplace; it includes the restructuring and replacement of traditional, masculine capabilities and attitudes in managers and employees. As corporations appreciate and incorporate more communal, participatory, and inclusive approaches to managerial and supervisory tasks into their everyday practices, there is an assumption that women will fare better and will be viewed as more competent and better

leaders. As Rudman and Glick (1999) point out, “This may not be the case for women who violate stereotypical expectations, however, because stereotypes of women's communality are not simply descriptive, but are prescriptive, suggesting what women ought to be like (Eagly, 1987). Prescriptions act as social norms, and violations of these norms are often punished by others (Cialdini & Trost, 1998)” (p. 1004). In the public relations literature, the explication of the word feminization is rarely given, but the term is used widely. The context for which it is used is for the numerical concept, but it is applied for all the concepts in this research—the numerical and the affective, emotive, and feminine.

The study's conclusions and findings validated the trends seen in teaching and nursing. Women were limited to the lower ranks due to societal and organizational socialization. Female practitioners did not have comparable negotiation skills, which would help in gaining higher salaries, and organizations undervalued women as workers. Female practitioners also experienced tension between her roles—a career professional, a mother, a wife, and a supervisor. Women opted for the technician role, carving out a clearer path of non-executive duties and responsibilities "because of societal expectations that women be 'less managerial'—less serious-minded, less aggressive, and less likely to be part of the 'good old boys'" (L. A. Grunig, Toth, and Hon, 2001 p. 262).

Wrigley (2002) attempted to identify the factors that support and perpetuate the glass ceiling for women in public relations and corporate communication. When faced with the glass ceiling, women devised strategies that allowed them to justify the existence of those structural barriers or demote the perceived impact of the glass ceiling's limitations on one's career (Wrigley, 2002). Negotiated resignation explained how the

“initial, or even steadfast, denial of the existence of a glass ceiling is the result of a rather complicated process in our culture that works to maintain the status quo, and thus denies that discrimination against women is present in the workplace or elsewhere in our culture” (Wrigley, 2002, p. 42). The refusal to confront the structure meant that women turned the blame inward, placing the burden of blame "on herself, on a lack of experience or credentials, or not working hard enough. The structure is not questioned" (Wrigley, 2002, p. 43).

Discrimination in salary and hiring. Several studies have examined the societal and organizational barriers contributing to discriminatory practices and procedures experienced by female practitioners. In public relations, the research has continued to demonstrate that women are paid less, evaluated lower, and retained in lower positions of power than men. In their study of gender discrepancies in organizational promotions and socialization, Aldoory and Toth found that both men and women believed that women were more likely to be hired for technical positions than men and disagreed that women were hired because of affirmative action. Salary differences were markedly different; for median salaries, \$17,000 separated men's earnings (\$65,000) and women's earnings (\$48,000). Although men did not believe there was a salary discrepancy, women knew and experienced the gap personally and among their colleagues. According to Aldoory and Toth, their work was unique because of its timing: "it documents gender discrepancies at a time when the public relations field is predominately women, whereas the previous studies found discrimination when the field was still predominantly men or when the field had equal numbers of men and women" (p. 122).

Through demography, Choi and Hon (2002) explored discrimination and gender differences in professional evaluations. The evaluations of professional men were affected by gender and gender composition in power composition. Choi and Hon wrote, "Regardless of perceptions of gender differences, men were still evaluated more favorably in relation to success than women" (p. 255). Although a balanced gender ratio among top management did not change the perception and evaluations of women, it can affect top communicators' evaluations of female practitioners and reduce income gaps between men and women.

Testing feminist theory in public relations, O'Neil (2003) assessed the influence of female and male public relations practitioners and the relationship between influence, formal power, and relationship power. Female practitioners in O'Neil's research had less formal structural power than male practitioners, and being female had a direct effect on perceived organizational influence. This research supported feminist public relations scholars' claims that female practitioners must adapt to organizational circumstances that constrain and confine their power. O'Neil wrote, "Female public relations practitioners must deal with the stress of having to present a persona that is compatible with a male-dominated dominant coalition, and most do not have the benefit of having a direct report relationship with either the CEO, president, or chairman" (p. 172).

Exploring the concept of leadership in female practitioners and educators, Aldoory (1998) argued that the study of leadership among women in the public relations field is necessary and significant because of the feminization of the field. "This influx of women and the corresponding concern for diminished value and salaries in the field have affected the few women who have reached leadership positions in public relations and sparked the

questions for this study" (Aldoory, 1998, p. 73). From ten interviews with female public relations leaders in practice and education, the researcher examined the "communicative attributes of leadership for women in public relations" (Aldoory, 1998, p. 96). Leadership, for both educators and practitioners, was conceptualized as compassion and vision. Regarding communication styles, Aldoory found that both groups encouraged two-way communication.

Research on Minority Practitioners. One of the first studies to examine minorities in public relations was Kern-Foxworth's (1989a) study of minority practitioner roles. This research provided data on the status and roles of minority practitioners in public relations. Kern-Foxworth was able to illustrate the typical minority practitioner:

black, female, age 38, who has an annual salary of \$38,337. She has achieved the status of middle level manager in a government agency or with a public utility that employs approximately 2,000 people. Having attained a degree in public relations, journalism, or communications, she has worked an average of 9 years in the profession. (Kern-Foxworth, 1989a, p. 45)

The financial status of minority practitioners was not equivalent to the status of the average practitioner; in 1987, the minority middle level manager/problem solver process facilitator earned \$38,337. In 1985, the salary for the position was calculated as \$54,320—a difference of \$15,983.

Mastin (1993) examined the perceptions of minority public relations professionals toward their organizational corporate culture. The majority of practitioners saw the value of a nurturing relationship with supervisors, did not perceive themselves as part of the

organization's informal network, and, if given the chance again, would not choose public relations as a career. Zerbinos and Clanton (1993) found that minority males perceived discriminatory practices affecting their careers more so than minority females. Although their respondents were most satisfied with networking opportunities and their present job function, they were least satisfied with their interaction with other minority practitioners. Len-Rios (1998) found practitioners of color faced constraints because of subtle discriminatory practices and stereotypical overtures on the part of their organizations and managers. Len-Rios found that female practitioners of color noticed less racial stereotyping and discrimination than male practitioners because the women were accustomed "to accommodating people's behavior and rationalizing it" (p. 552).

African American Practitioners. Most of the research on African American practitioners focused on women. According to the research, incidents of tokenism, racism, discrimination, and opportunities for advancement by representing the community in the workplace have shaped the careers of African-American women. In 1994, Kern-Foxworth, along with Gandy, Hines, and Miller, contemplated the public relations roles deployed and enacted by Black women. They found the typical Black public relations professional was a 33-year-old college graduate, working in an office of a consumer service firm with seven employees and spent the majority of her time giving advice and counsel. At the conclusion of their study, the authors wrote that their work filled "a void that has existed since the inception of the so-called velvet ghetto. It is important to segment the samples because Black females ... may not share the same experiences as others who work in the profession. Prior to this study, this issue had not been addressed" (p. 432).

Wise (1997) compared the socialization experiences of African American women with the assumptions of the Velvet Ghetto Study (Cline, Toth, Turk, Walters, Johnson, & Smith, 1986). One concern Wise had with the Velvet Ghetto study's conclusions was the broad generalizations it made regarding the socialization of all women in public relations. According to Wise, "African American women tend to come from atmospheres where the wives' employment is accepted and expected" (p. 16). The senior-level managerial women interviewed by Wise balanced masculine and feminine sex role characteristics, and for these women, race played a greater role in socialization than gender. "The state of being either African American or female, or both, affects many of the professional situations that the women included in this study experience in the workplace" (p. 63). Several respondents mentioned incidents where they were approached to handle tasks or take on additional duties because of their race. These expectations are examples of "pigeonholing."

Pompper (2004) identified four roles in her interviews with 28 African American female practitioners and uncovered an ethnic solidarity and acquiescence paradox for her participants. The ethnic solidarity theme involved relationship-building skills and strong community ties. In the acquiescence theme, the African American practitioners felt and were defeated by their organizational situations, accepting the status quo and holding a pessimistic and skeptical attitude that things would change. According to Pompper, "Preoccupied with maintaining an image of strength, they are exceedingly hard on themselves, harvest insecurities and feelings of victimization, ignore personal needs, and hesitate to ask for what they want" (p. 36).

Asian American Practitioners. Few studies, theses, or dissertations on Asian American practitioners and their experience in public relations were found. Yamashita (1992) investigated the status of Asian American practitioners, interviewing 16 Asian American public relations practitioners from four ethnic groups (Chinese-American, Japanese-American, Korean-American, and Vietnamese-American). Among the surveyed practitioners, the average age was 30.5 years old, and the average length of experience was 5 years, six months. Yamashita found a dichotomy between the practitioners: firm-type and government-type. The firm-type practitioner was about 28 years old, had five years experience in public relations, and was a second- or third-generation American who was more fluent in English than in an Asian language yet familiar with Asian culture. The government-type practitioner was a 33-year-old graduate degree holder who often communicated with Asian or Asian American clients and considered himself or herself responsible for helping other Asians integrate or get more involved into American society. Both types used the "gap-filling" model—a model proposed by Yamashita "to fill the gaps between an American organization and its Asian clients or publics using practitioners familiar with both cultures" (Yamashita, 1992, p. 101).

Thirteen years after Yamashita's research, no published study or conference paper was found that focused on Asian or Asian American practitioners, their roles, their challenges, and their interactions with publics. As Ki (2005) noted, "Despite the increase and significant contribution of Asian-Americans [to the workforce], they have been underrepresented in the academic field of public relations" (p. 10). Ki's qualitative study explored the career concerns and motivations of Asian American practitioners, and she

found that stereotypes such as the model minority were prevalent in the workplace for Asian American practitioners.

Hispanic Practitioners. Few studies, theses, or dissertations on the experiences of Hispanics in public relations were located. Interested in the experiences of Hispanic practitioners, Ferreira (1993) surveyed and interviewed 42 Hispanic practitioners across the United States. Hired to communicate with Hispanic publics, these practitioners enacted the manager's role but still had the duties and responsibilities of the technician. In Ferreira's analysis, the Hispanic practitioners spanned boundaries between the organizations and the Hispanic communities outside the organization, practicing the gap-filling model of public relations. Most practitioners did not have formal education in the field, and the two-way symmetrical model was the lowest-ranked model. However, "practitioners indicated that they facilitated open communication lines to create a win-win relationship between the management of the organization and its publics" (Ferreira, 1993, p. 103). The typical Hispanic practitioner in this study was a female around 39 years old with a bachelor's degree in communications or journalism, has worked in public relations for over 11 years, is bilingual in Spanish and English, and has worked in a large government agency in the Southwest (Ferreira, 1993).

An extension of Ferreira's work is Beazley's (2005) examination of the cultural awareness and cultural identity of Hispanic practitioners who communicate with Hispanic publics. Cultural awareness and knowledge allows a practitioner to have sensitivity to the cultural nuances of the public (Beazley, 2005), helping an organization avoid stereotyping, embarrassment, and poor translations.

Research on LGB Practitioners in Public Relations. Few studies have been published about the professional lives and careers of lesbian, gay male, and bisexual (LGB) public relations practitioners. In fact, L. A. Grunig, Toth, and Hon (2001) commented on the limited knowledge public relations scholars have regarding sexual orientation and communication management. "By comparison with literature that deals with sexual orientation and management, it [the literature on racial and ethnic diversity in public relations] seems extensive" (p. 125).

According to J. D. Woods and Lucas (1994), public relations is considered one of many organizational support functions that ghettoize gay men. They concluded, "Ghettos tend to grow up around jobs that involve little discretion or uncertainty, in which what to do and how to judge its doing are fairly routine.... In most of these roles the required skills are tangible, and performance can be measured objectively" (p. 230). Although these ghettos offer security and are a tolerant haven, they can impede promotion and job advancement. The "lavender ceiling" may impinge one's chances for mobility. The lavender ceiling is the perceived and actual societal and organizational deterrents to upper management for LGB individuals (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995; Second USDA Task Force on Sexual Orientation, 2000). The lavender ceiling is enacted "when homophobia and heterosexism are an established part of the workplace culture, the open service, career development, and promotional advancement of GLBT [sic] employees is impeded or prevented" (Second USDA Task Force Report, 2000, p. 16).

The paucity of material on LGB public relations practitioners is challenging to scholars who wish to study this area. The population of LGB practitioners is unknown, but the percentage of lesbians and gays in the workplace is between 4% and 17% according to

one estimate (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991). Public relations may attract LGB professionals who may encounter racial discrimination, heterosexism, ghettoization, and sexism. Not knowing their experiences, burdens, barriers, and opportunities in organizational life limits the field and hinders the development of theory because sexual orientation is a dimension of nonobservable diversity. The concept of requisite variety is not enhanced and is flawed when this aspect of difference is neglected.

Criticism of the Existing Public Relations Research. There are several shortcomings in the current body of knowledge in public relations on minority practitioners and LGB issues. First, master's or doctoral students have done much of the research, and most has not been published. Second, many researchers do not look beyond the categories of race and gender to locate any other potential identities of importance to the participants and to explore and observe any other sites of oppression and opportunity in the public relations function and in the organization. This store of research is still valuable for its findings and promise. However, the researchers did not go beyond the existing public relations theory to break new ground regarding diversity management, requisite variety, or other concepts relevant to the field. No alternative paradigms or hypotheses of the current metatheory were offered; no constructive criticisms were given. The researchers did not "problematize extant theoretical constructs and ask whether they are appropriate for a public relations discipline that incorporates multiple diversities" (Sha & Ford, 2007, p. 390).

Issues of Discrimination

Discrimination. The words racism, discrimination, and prejudice are used interchangeably in everyday colloquial conversations. However, each is a distinct concept

that has a unique relationship to the other. Racial discrimination encompasses any act "with intended or unintended negative or unfavorable consequences for racially or ethnically dominated groups" (Essed, 1991, p. 45). These actions can include verbal and nonverbal communication that creates and confirms the racial inequality in the macro-social structure. J. R. Feagin and C. B. Feagin (1978) considered discrimination as "practices carried out by members of dominant groups which have a differential and negative impact on members of subordinate groups" (p. 20-21). To Pettigrew, discrimination was "an institutional process of exclusion against an outgroup"(p. x). These definitions emphasize power over relationships or "the ability to carry out significant and repeated discriminatory acts...in an array of locations" (J. R. Feagin & Vera, 1995, p. 12).

Racism. Omi and Winant (1994) defined racism as "a fundamental characteristic of social projects which create or reproduce structure of domination based on essentialist categories of race" (p. 162). Omi and Winant's approach to racism and race stemmed from the theoretical concept of racial formation. This social constructionist approach considers racial categories as elaborate fluctuations across social structures, discourses, time, and continents; these categories are "created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55). Omi and Winant regarded race as a sociohistorical concept rather than a biological concept; race is made visible and is enacted through structure and representation.

According to Omi and Winant (1994), a racial project is the concurrent interplay of racial representations, explanations, and constructions and is "an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines" (p. 56). If the process of racial transformation occurs through the linkage between societal structures and images, then it

is the racial project where the relationship is explored, dissected, and eventually made between what race means and how it is organized or shaped in the everyday lives and in the larger social structure.

J. R. Feagin and Vera (1995) conceptualized racism on the structural, institutional, and individual levels, defining racism as "the socially organized set of attitudes, ideas, and practices that deny African Americans and other people of color the dignity, opportunities, freedoms, and rewards that this nation offers white [sic] Americans" (p. 7). They considered the "madness of racism" (p. 15) as a social practice consisting of routine activities and actions imbued with symbolism and mythology.

Racist rites involve minority victims, several categories of white participants (officiants, acolytes, and passive observers), a range of acts (gestures, words, avoidance, physical attacks), an assortment of instruments (workplace appraisal forms, burning crosses, police batons), and an array of myths (stereotypes about black Americans) that legitimate racist acts in perpetrators' minds. (p. 9)

The symbolism, myth, formality, and ceremony are attached to the real, concrete racist actions that contain a ritual nature.

According to Essed (1991), racism is a tumult of "cognitions, actions, and procedures that contribute to the development and perpetuation of a system" in which Whites dominate other groups. Essed situated racism at the micro- and macro-levels. At the macro-level, racism was a systematic web of inequities, created by historical processes and structural barriers that managed to create and recreate themselves through conventional, routine practices. At the micro level, Essed determined that specific

practices and actions could be considered racist if they replicated the existing structural racial inequalities. However, the macro and micro points of view are symbiotic or mutually interdependent; one cannot exist without the other. Essed argued that the structures that maintain racism are not external to individuals. Rather, these dynamic structures are produced and reified by agents through routine and everyday social practices, "but specific practices are by definition racist only when they activate existing structural racial inequality in the system" (p. 39).

Everyday Racism. In Essed's (1991) study of Black women in Dutch and U.S. society, she applied the concept of everyday racism to the experiences of Black women in order to understand how these experiences were structured and organized by racist and gendered ideas. Essed defined everyday racism as:

a process in which (a) socialized racist notions are integrated into meanings that make practices immediately definable and manageable, (b) practices with racist implications become in themselves familiar and repetitive, and (c) underlying racial and ethnic relations are actualized and reinforced through these routine and familiar practices in everyday situations (p. 52).

In her study, the application of everyday racism to the experiences of Black women made the study and its outcomes an analysis of gendered racism. Gendered racism is the racial oppression of Black women constructed by gender role norms and perceptions. In her analysis, Essed wrote that racism and sexism "narrowly intertwine and combine under certain conditions into one, hybrid phenomenon" (p. 31).

From her research, Essed (1991) concluded that the knowledge Black women had of everyday racism was gained and absorbed through everyday encounters. Everyday

racism was not a limited occurrence or a serendipitous happenstance in the lives of Black women in America and in the Netherlands; it was a daily fact that faced them in a myriad of ways: interpersonal interactions, vivid media images, and personal retellings from family, friends, and neighbors. As Essed claimed, "Everyday racism is also mediated by discourse and practices affecting larger (sub)groups of Blacks" (p. 284). Black women developed sensitized, shaded, and nuanced ways to comprehend and distinguish covert signals and missives of the majority group. These tactics were learned independent of the media and outside of the formal educational institutions. In the study, most U.S. Black women had direct exposure and knowledge of racism; from an early age, they learned that they belong to a marginalized and oppressed societal group and learned more about racism through media images, socialization, family stories, college classes, and community involvement (Essed, 1991).

Modern racism. Since the 1960s, racial attitudes toward racial minorities have become more tolerant and more accommodating (J. R. Feagin & Vera, 1995; Sears, 1988). In today's society, few White Americans would espouse statements about a minority group's intelligence and athleticism or endorse racial segregation publicly. Characterized by blatant bigotry, prohibition of interracial contact, and antebellum stereotypes regarding Blacks, "old-fashioned racism" may be fading from the national landscape (Sears, 1988; McConahay, 1982, 1986), but a newer form of racial attitudes and bigotry has emerged.

Modern racism has been typified as "a more subtle, indirect, and rationalizable type of racial bigotry" (Brief et al., 2000). With modern racism, the focus is more on the racial symbols or "the beliefs and stereotypes rooted in socialization and not in personal

experience" (McConahay, 1982, p. 705).² According to McConahay (1986), the principal tenets of modern racism are the following:

(1) Discrimination is a thing of the past because Blacks now have the freedom to compete in the marketplace and to enjoy those things they can afford. (2) Blacks are pushing too hard, too fast, and into places where they are not wanted. (3) These tactics and demands are unfair. (4) Therefore, recent gains are undeserved and the prestige granting institutions of society are giving Blacks more attention and the concomitant status than they deserve (pp. 92-93).

Beyond these, McConahay identified two other factors inherent in modern racism—first, that the first four tenets are empirical facts thus it is not racism, and second, racism is not bad. Those who perpetuate the ideology of modern racism do not see themselves, their beliefs, or their ideals as racist, and "they act in ways to protect a nonprejudiced, nondiscriminatory self-image" (p. 75). After analyzing several studies, Sears (1988) considered the content of symbolic racism to fall upon the same lines: resentment, antagonism, and a disavowal of continued discrimination.

Heterosexism and homophobia. An "ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, relationship, or community" (Herek, 1993, pp. 89-90), heterosexism is created and sustained in social institutions, social protocol and customs, and personal attributes (Herek, 1993). Heterosexism is derived from the cultural norms that are perceived to be violated by certain forms of

² Both modern racism and symbolic racism describe the same concept. However, scholars disagree over the use of the term symbolic racism to describe the approach. McConahay argued that traditional or "old-fashioned racism" can also focus on symbols, so he prefers the use of modern racism. Sears (1988), who

sexuality and societal negativity toward certain sexual orientations. In Brickell's (2005) discussion of heterosexism, heterosexuality is positioned as "normal," and lesbians and gays are identified as anomalous and "disordered beings" (p. 86). Gays and lesbians exist "as the abnormal Other, 'outside' of the universe of the fully adjusted, mature, and fulfilling heterosexuality" (p. 86). Heterosexuality is associated with "normal" masculinity, "normal" femininity, and a "normal" sexuality (Herek, 1993; Brickell, 2005). Homosexuality violates these ideological rules and norms of gender and sexuality.

Herek (1993a, 1993b) divided heterosexism into two types: cultural heterosexism and psychological heterosexism. Cultural heterosexism is the societal and cultural reification of the invisibility, condemnation, and violence toward gays through religion, legal means, psychology and psychiatry, and media (Herek, 1993a). Psychological heterosexism manifests itself as the individual attitudes and behaviors that are revealed as anti-gay prejudice (Herek, 1993a). These attitudes and behaviors regarding gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals start in childhood when children learn and adapt to the "good," "bad," and "wrong" expectations of their peer groups and parents. These concepts and social attitudes emerge when children have limited contact and direct experience with someone who is openly gay. Therefore, when people try to organize and make sense of experiences, most people begin to attach their expectations and attitudes of homosexuality to symbols as opposed to associating this idea with actual people. As Herek wrote, these symbols are "the embodiment of such concepts as 'sin,' 'sickness,' 'predator,' 'outsider,' or whatever else an individual considers to be the opposite of her- or himself, or set apart from her or his community" (p. 96).

pioneered the research in this area, continued to use the term symbolic racism because it fits "the contrast it was invented to serve — it was not old fashioned, and not rooted in personal experience" (p. 55).

Accompanying heterosexism is a constellation of antigay beliefs, attitudes, and prejudice (Jung & Smith, 1993; Ragins, Cornwell, & Miller, 2003; Herek, 1984; Lehne, 1976). Homophobia is the irrational fear, intolerance, and aversion associated with gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender individuals. Herek (1993) described homophobia as "explicit hostility or prejudice toward gay men and women," but he believed the term was inadequate and inappropriate. First, the term "overly psychologizes" the prejudice faced by those in the LGB community; the fault and blame is squarely placed on individuals rather than on cultural and social institutions who continue to perpetuate ideology and stereotypes. Herek (1993) claimed, "Homophobia... is manifest at both institutional and societal levels..., so it is important to distinguish psychological homophobia from its institutional manifestations" (p. 316-317). Second, the use of the -phobia suffix suggests a fear that is dysfunctional. Herek (1993) argued that homophobic attitudes fulfill functional needs for those who possess them. For example, homophobic attitudes connected to and deriving benefits from a utilitarian or expressive function have different outcomes. The utilitarian outcome regarding homophobic attitudes is based on reward or punishment, and the expressive function regarding those attitudes affirms a person's sense of self. Therefore, if a heterosexual individual is homophobic and meets and satisfies his or her social-expressive function, the heterosexual person may express prejudices toward the LGB community and homophobic attitudes in accordance with social desirability bias in order "to win approval from important others and thereby increase self-esteem" (Herek, 1993, p. 325).

Scholars disagree about the relationship between homophobia and heterosexism. Some scholars stress that the two constructs are independent and separate entities. Jung

and Smith (1993) did not bind the two concepts together, stating that there is "no logical or necessary connection...between the two. People who are homophobic may not be heterosexual; those who are heterosexual may not be homophobic" (p. 14). Other scholars disagreed, viewing homophobia as an accompanying part of heterosexism (cf. Herek, 1993; Morrow, 2001). For example, Morrow argued that homophobia and heterosexism were interlocking forms of oppression sustained by major social systems. She argued that homophobia sprouted from a heterosexual belief system that simultaneously benefited those who were heterosexual and oppressed those who were not.

Consequences of Discrimination on Organizational Members

Racism, heterosexism, and other forms of discrimination impact individuals in organizations. The following sections outline resulting outcomes such as tokenism, pigeonholing, biculturalism, and stigma.

Tokenism. Tokenism is "the policy or practice of making only a symbolic effort" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1997). The characteristics of an organizational token were described vividly by Kanter (1977), who defined a token as the representative of his or her racial, ethnic, gender, or other minority group in their work group. Simultaneously, the token carries all the responsibilities and duties as the minority representative and stands as the symbol of their category in the organization, "especially when they fumble, yet they are seen as unusual examples of their kind, especially when they succeed" (p. 139).

The token is treated as a specimen under scrutiny. Tokens are often evaluated in terms of their diversity and their role. In Kanter's (1977) analysis of organizational life, the female tokens were evaluated on two fronts: "how as women they carried out the sales or management role; and how as managers they lived to images of womanhood" (p. 214).

Pigeonholing. According to Mallette (1995) and L. A. Grunig, Toth, and Hon (2001), pigeonholing is a form of tokenism. Minority practitioners are there for show and to handle certain audiences, not for input into policy making. The minority practitioner may be consulted regarding race-related issues. As L. A. Grunig, Toth, and Hon pointed out: "As a result, they have had to interpret – directly or indirectly their culture for Americans of European descent" (p. 154).

Similar to pigeonholing is "the acrylic vault." Kern-Foxworth (1989b) coined this term to describe the peculiar situation of minority public relations practitioners who cannot move into lateral positions or progress up the corporate ladder. Instead, these practitioners are trapped or locked into one position, a token or showcase position. Describing the experiences of racial minority public relations practitioners, Kern-Foxworth wrote the following:

they have been skeptical about their positions in the industry. They felt that their jobs had been relegated to merely "show positions." These feelings were cultivated because minorities were only permitted to be a part of the industry during the 1960s and 1970s when companies were threatened by boycotts from minority consumer markets. In other words, they were hired as "tokens" who were empowered with a minute amount of authority. They had no voice in policy-making decisions and their talents were not recognized. Many minority practitioners have speculated that they were hired only to satisfy quotas, affirmative action goals, and to comply with equal opportunity guidelines. The assumption therefore is that minority practitioners are analogous to valuables locked in an acrylic vault. (p. 244)

These practitioners are prevented from participating in the regular activities of the organization, fastened into their positions and engaged in "a no-win situation with no way out" (Kern-Foxworth, 1989b, p. 244) due to socialization and organizational impediments. According to Kern-Foxworth, practitioners get locked into this vault because of superficially imposed barriers reinforced by racism and prejudice, lack of awareness regarding the profession of public relations, and lack of career training and mentoring to prepare minority practitioners for a public relations career.

Tillery-Larkin (1999) found five forms of pigeonholing in the public relations literature. They are the following:

(a) being hired to work on primarily race-related projects, (b) being hired into a stereotypical position for an African American, (c) being hired to fill a quota, (d) being restricted from advancing to higher positions in an organization, and/or [sic] (e) being restricted from functionary positions with real decision-making power. (p. 19)

In Tillery-Larkin's estimation, four of the identified traits of pigeonholing resulted from being limited to working on race-related projects. Therefore, in her dissertation, which investigated the perceptions of pigeonholing among African American practitioners, the characteristics of being hired into stereotypical positions, quota-filling, restricted advancement, and the denial of a promotion into a decision-making positions were used as characteristics of pigeonholed practitioners.

Ferreira (1993) and Yamashita (1992) found examples of pigeonholing among Hispanic and Asian American practitioners. In the Ferreira's (1993) research, Hispanic practitioners were hired to communicate with Hispanic publics. She wrote: "Practitioners

who use the gap-filling model are mediators between the organization and its minority publics. These practitioners help to narrow the differences by explaining to the organization the culture of its diversified publics" (p. 113). Yamashita (1992) found that for Asian or Asian-American practitioners who were hired to communicate solely with their ethnic or racial group, their capacity in the organizations were limited to certain duties such as interpreting or translating. Even if these practitioners wanted to stop or limit their gap-filling duties and move into another position, they could not because of the organization's need and expectations for them to be cultural interpreters. However, these practitioners did not perceive any discrimination in their jobs and used the "model minority" stereotype of the smart, bright Asian to their advantage.

In contrast, the typical practitioner in Tillery-Larkin's (1999) sample was working at the managerial level on non-race-specific accounts and did not consider himself or herself pigeonholed. She concluded: "They were satisfied with their jobs and were working on mainstream projects. Further, those who did work on race-related projects had created a niche in which they enjoyed doing so" (p. 241).

Biculturality. Ramirez (1983) considered biculturalism the "integration of the competencies and sensitivities associated with two cultures within a person" (Vargas-Reighley, 2005, p. 40). Biculturality illustrates how a person straddles two or more cultures, giving and taking from those cultures and switching identities and personas when encountering people and situations from those different worlds. Writing about the career experiences of professional Black women, E. L. Bell (1990) commented that life required them to shape a career in the majority world while keeping up appearances and aspects of a cultural and community life in the minority realm.

The metaphor of "shifting" proposed by Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) offered an intriguing explanation and illustration of the bicultural concept. Jones and Shorter-Gooden interviewed 71 Black women to explore how Black women discern bigotry and gather the resilience to deal with the emotional and physical consequences of such bigotry. For those authors, the shifting principle was "subterfuge" (p. 6):

Black women are relentlessly pushed to serve and satisfy others and made to hide their true selves to placate White colleagues, Black men, and other segments of the community. They shift to accommodate differences in class as well as gender and ethnicity. From one moment to the next, they change their outward behavior, attitude, or tone, shifting "White," then shifting to "Black" again, shifting "corporate," shifting cool....And shifting is often internal, invisible. It's the chipping away at her sense of self, at her feelings of wholeness and centeredness—often a consequence of living amidst racial and gender bias. (p. 6)

Jones and Shorter-Gooden discussed the change in "shifting"—how the shift in the slavery and Jim Crow era was a literal shift in body language. Currently, the shifts match the examples of modern racism (McConahay, 1986): subtler, less noticeable, and more insidious. Shifting is more of a cultural positioning (E. L. Bell, 1990), pivoting between different experiences and existences and is just as emotionally taxing.

Kawahara and Van Kirk (2004) used the term bicultural efficacy to explain the ease and ability of an individual to slip between two worlds. If a person has bicultural efficacy, he or she has developed and maintained ties—personal, familial, friendship, community, and work—within the two worlds without denying or relinquishing cultural

identity (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Kawahara & Van Kirk, 2004). Kawahara and Van Kirk noted that these ties sustain and support an individual through good and bad times: "In such situations, it is believed that the person's bicultural competence will assist her or him in building and maintaining support networks in the different contexts while also providing support when either group rejects the person or when the person is developing competence in one group" (p. 41). This view agrees with Ibarra's (1993) conceptualization of "functionally differentiated networks," a common strategy for minorities and women in organizations. "In order to be effective without forfeiting access to the social benefits associated with close work relationships and critical advice from others who share similar experiences, many women and minorities logically choose to navigate a course between two different circles" (p. 74). A minority employee will maintain a circle of colleagues to rely upon for work-related advice, support, and interaction. The other circle or network will include friends and mentors who provide information, advice, support, friendship, and other expressive benefits (Ibarra, 1992, 1993; Denton, 1990; E. L. Bell, 1990).

Stigma. There are many stigmatized groups in American society—the obese, the stutters, and the dark-skinned. A person who belongs to a stigmatized group, according to Crocker, Major, and Steele (1998), is "a person whose social identity or membership in some social category, calls into question his or her full humanity—the person is devalued, spoiled, or flawed in the eyes of other" (p. 504). Goffman (1963) considered a stigma an attribute that made an individual different from others, "especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive; sometimes it is also called a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap" (p. 3). A stigmatized person is the binary to Goffman's normals. With his scarring or

religion or her addiction or race, the stigmatized person has an "undesired differentness" (p. 5). He or she is imperfect, a non-human, an inferior person, and a danger to society. A stigma is a social construction with two key components: the evaluation of a flaw or difference. Following that acknowledgement, there is subsequent devaluation of the individual from society (Dovidio, Major, & Crocker, 2000).

Not all stigmas are visible or carry a societal weight. In distinguishing between the "grossly different types of stigma" (Goffman, 1963, p. 4), Goffman mentioned the abomination of the body (e.g., having a physical deformity); stigmas related to individual personality, character, or attitude; and tribal stigma "transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family" (p. 4). Even a job or profession can obtain a stigma because it is considered eccentric, dirty, or deviant. In their initial and follow-up studies of topless dancers, Thompson and Harred (1992) and Thompson, Harred, and Burks (2003) found that the dancers were stigmatized by members of their community and families because of their occupation.

The ability to "pass" in society without revealing membership in a stigmatized group is easier for those whose stigma is not easily apparent. For example, the stigma of a Black or African-American identity has prompted some people of color with lighter complexions to "pass" or slip into White society in an attempt to evade discrimination (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992). A stigmatized person who is passing controls information about himself or herself, revealing much, little, or nothing in certain relationships (Goffman, 1963). It is the decision of the individual "to display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where" (p. 42).

The perception management of a stigmatized identity goes beyond passing and protecting feelings. According to stigma theory, sexual orientation is a characteristic of stigma (Goffman, 1963). Although lesbian, gay male, and bisexual (LGB) professionals make up between 4% and 17% of the American work force (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991), little information exists about the management of identity and their experiences with discrimination in the workplace. N. Collins and Miller (1994) defined self-disclosure as the "act of revealing personal information about oneself to another" (p. 457). For LGB persons in the workplace, the disclosure to colleagues about their sexual orientation is a difficult event because of the possibility of fear, rejection, retaliation, and hatred (Griffith & Hebl, 2002).³ Griffith and Hebl, in one of the first studies to examine the self-disclosure of sexual orientation in the workplace, found that the perception of organizational support regarding sexual orientation was related to the degree of disclosure. If the organization had written nondiscrimination policies, had demonstrated support for gay and lesbian activities, and offered diversity training that specifically included LGB issues, employees were more likely to be "out" and to report less job discrimination. Griffith and Hebl

³ This study does not have the capacity to locate individuals who are closeted or those who have not fully "come out" to themselves, families, co-workers, or associates. Because this research focused on qualitative interviews and relied upon interpersonal contact (e.g., snowball sample) to obtain contacts, locating pronounced closeted individuals would be difficult. There would not be anonymity but confidentiality with the research. However, there are a few studies that have located closeted individuals. Several researchers have explored online communities and the various functions of these communities in the coming out process. According to Heinz, Gu, Inuzuka, and Zender (2002), "The relative safety and anonymity of cyberspace must appeal to a minority whose minority status often does not become visible until a relationship-space-time-person association occurs" (p. 108). Heinz et al. wrote that the construction of LGBT existence and identities is based on traditional hegemonic ideas even if it occurs on the Internet: "Language and communication play pivotal roles in the processes involved when GLBT people come out and acknowledge—whether to themselves and/or to others—their nonheterosexual orientations" (p. 109). In his proposal that chat rooms provided a source for interaction and socialization, Sanders (2005) argued that online communication mechanisms such as chat rooms were opportunities to build a community. In his study of gay youth, Thomas (2002) argued that the chat room facilitated the coming-out process: "Through chat rooms, gay youth are able to transcend their social contexts to anonymously interact with other gay people in order to gain affirmation of same-sex feelings and desires, explore their sexuality, ask questions, make on- and off-line friendships, and find sexual and romantic partners" (p. 1).

concluded, "One of the most fundamental motivations that people possess is a need to belong and have social support, and this same motivation has profound implications in the workplace. Those who acknowledge and receive favorable and supportive reactions from others feel happier and less stressed in the workplace" (p. 1196).

In their study of workplace diversity, Ragins, Cornwell, and Miller (2003) examined the effects of race, gender, and relational demography on the experiences of gay and lesbian employees. Having a supervisor of the same sexual orientation or the same race made it more likely for gay and lesbian employees to disclose their identity and be "out" at work. Gay respondents who worked in mostly heterosexual or balanced work groups were less likely to be "out" than were respondents who worked with mostly gay coworkers. Work teams composed primarily of men were the most heterosexist for gay and lesbian employees, especially lesbian employees. According to Ragins et al., race and gender did not buffer or protect White gay men from heterosexism or discrimination based on sexual orientation: "[O]penly gay men may not be invited to join 'the good old boy's club.' Moreover, the disclosure of a gay identity after entering this club may evoke heterosexist backlash; gay men may be viewed as imposters who infiltrated the White heterosexual male bastion" (Ragins et al., 2003, p. 68).

As Chrobot-Mason, Button, and DiClement (2001) suggested, lesbian and gay men will avoid disclosure of their sexual identity and engage in passing in the workplace when becoming "marked" or having a stigma will result in negative consequences. Once a person is revealed or "outed," they may be discredited, discriminated against, and placed into a stereotypical role (Button, 2004; Goffman, 1963). S. E. Woods and Harbeck's (1992) research on lesbian physical educators exemplified this point. All twelve

participants believed that if they were open about their sexual orientation, they would be fired. The majority tightly concealed their identity, employing selective disclosure and risk-taking strategies to reveal their identity to colleagues, students, and other teachers. As S. E. Woods and Harbeck concluded:

The participants experienced homophobia in both external and internal lives. Heterosexuality was acknowledged and celebrated as the norm, while homosexuality was discredited and silenced. The participants experienced homophobia on both external and internal levels....They survived by constantly denying and hiding their lesbianism to work in their chosen profession. They accepted living in these two worlds as a necessary way of life for a lesbian physical education teacher, yet their stories revealed a high cost in emotional energy and self-esteem as a consequence of this bifurcated existence. (p. 160)

From Button's (2004) findings, the identity management strategies of lesbians and gay men were more sophisticated than the dichotomous variables of passing as heterosexual and openly proclaiming their sexual orientation. The three identity management strategies that J. D. Woods and Lucas (1993) identified among gay males were used in an orchestrated fashion; the participants used active and passive disclosure strategies. Chrobot-Mason et al. (2001) found gender differences in the implementation of disclosure strategies. Lesbians and gay men classified and defined their strategies the same way, but they differed in the implementation of the disclosure strategies. For women, a negative relationship existed between avoidance (revealing nothing about yourself and making yourself appear asexual) and flat, less hierarchical group processes. Women adopted the

integration strategy in the open group setting, preferring to reveal their sexual identity and adapt to the consequences. Most men used counterfeit measures, constructing a false heterosexual identity.

Research Questions

In this conceptualization, I have presented the major theoretical constructs forming the basis for this research. Based on this conceptualization, I posed the following Research Questions:

RQ1. How do minority public relations practitioners understand and make meaning of their raced, gendered, and sexual identities within their organizations? How and how well do practitioners negotiate and manage their identities in organizational settings?

With this research question, I explored practitioners' perceptions of identity and their personal experiences. I include here an examination of identity through the lenses of power, requisite variety, and institutional barriers.

RQ2. How do minority public relations practitioners understand and make meaning of organizational power? What factors play a role in minority public relations practitioners' interpretation of power?

I examined how the idea of power is converted into social fact in the lives of practitioners. I explored the ways in which the practitioners interpret power in work situations and how practitioners negotiate its meaning with other people. The further one moves up in the organization, the opportunity to accumulate power increases (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Power may be derived from a position, the control of resources, the control of information, or the ability to induce change (Mintzberg, 1983). Practitioners differed in their view of power and how it is enacted in everyday, organizational settings.

RQ3. How do minority public relations practitioners negotiate and/or challenge any perceived constraints resulting from organizational power?

With this research question, I explored how practitioners act as organizational activists (Holtzhausen, 2000; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; Holtzhausen, Petersen, & Voto, 2003), contesting and questioning barriers and, in some cases, instituting change in public relations departments and throughout organizations. Perceived constraints can be individual barriers, societal barriers, or organizational barriers.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this section is to review the rationale for selecting a certain methodology, to detail the advantages of the selected method, and to highlight the procedures that were used to conduct the study. Also, the plan for data management and data analysis is included.

Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

An understanding of African American and Hispanic heterosexual practitioners, white lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB), and African American and Hispanic LGB practitioners' perceptions of power, diversity, and identity accomplished several research objectives. This research identified how these practitioners navigate through organizational networks, how they manage identity in their organizations, and how these practitioners interpret the concept of power. In the exploration of the connections and interplay of identity and power in public relations and the examination of meaning-making of practitioners, the resulting product is descriptive data that must be unraveled, understood, and clarified, then bracketed back to the Excellence theory. Therefore, qualitative methodology was the best way to recognize how practitioners interpret their experiences in organizations.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) believed the goal of the qualitative researcher was "to group the processes by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are" (p. 38). According to Lofland (1971), the purpose of qualitative research is "of delineating forms, constitution of meaning in everyday phenomena; of documenting in loving detail the things that exist" (p. 13). Qualitative research is beneficial for researchers who are interested in understanding the contours and essence of human

behavior (Lindlof, 1995) and who are intrigued with “the complexity of social interactions as expressed in daily life and with the meanings participants themselves attribute to these interactions” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 2). Qualitative researchers work with words, gestures, and actions to form conclusions, and qualitative research gathers “detailed description of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors” (Patton, 1980, p. 22).

Many scholars have commented on the strengths of qualitative data. For Miles and Huberman (1998), data are collected in natural, quotidian settings, and the descriptions are layered and vivid. Because data are nested in an actual context, the participant's meanings and lived experience demonstrate and unveil the complexity of their social reality. As Miles and Huberman explained, the data gathered by the qualitative researcher contain an element of groundedness and locality because the information was collected in close proximity to the participants and their daily lived experience. The goal of the qualitative researcher is to know the human material and symbolic experience. However, one should not mistake or confuse understanding with immersion. Kleinman and Copp (1993) wrote that researchers lose sight of the goal and purpose of qualitative research when they look forward to the next set of field notes or the next field experience rather than being reflexive and contemplative about the last interview or the last setting visited.

H. J. Rubin and I. S. Rubin (1995) discussed the appropriateness and suitability between the topic and the research. If the current state of the issue under exploration is unclear, qualitative research can provide explanations for why and how things are happening. Qualitative research is also most appropriate for unraveling relationships and

defining the parameters of issues that require "in-depth understanding that is best communicated through examples and rich narratives" (p. 51). This study identified and examined the perceptions of discrimination and power by racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities in organizations.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), "Qualitative researchers study people doing things together in the places where these things are done" (p. 24). How the site is constituted depends on the researcher and his or her interpretative practices. The relationship with my participants was and, with some, remains "long-term and diffuse," the way Agar (1996) described the best type of relationship in the field. This study was conducted with organizational actors, and I discussed their role in the organization and how these individuals make meaning of their role as public relations practitioners and how they perform multiple selves in the organization. The data emerge directly from an actual setting: the workplace, specifically the public relations department. Because of this naturalistic setting and the need "to preserve the form and content of human behavior and to analyze its qualities" (Lindlof, 1995, p. 2), I was not able to manipulate the setting, and I had little control over what will happen (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

In-depth Interviewing

Specifically, I used in-depth interviews. As Marshall and Rossman (1999) explained, in-depth interviews "are much more like conversations than formal, structured interviews. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses" (p. 82). The in-depth interview is "a conversation with a purpose" (H. J. Rubin & I. S. Rubin, 1995), where the researcher and participant can explore various tangents

and dimensions of a topic freely. H. J. Rubin and I. S. Rubin wrote that the ability to talk or be interviewed gives participants a chance to be reflexive about their lives or jobs and to get their stories told. In interviews, the researcher and participants can bounce around topics and relate them to experiences. Through all of this, the researcher must listen for meaning.

In this research, I utilized the features of active interviewing. In active interviews, meaning is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Unlike the traditional approach to interviews, the active interview does not view the participants as a repository of knowledge and experience to be mined or as a "vessel of answers" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 7) waiting to be toppled over. Instead, active interviewing views the interview as a "reality-constructing, meaning-making occasion" (p. 4), and the participants collaborate in the articulation of experience. Interview responses are "practical productions...[that rely] on the interaction between interview participants" (p. 18). The participant is seen as a "productive source of knowledge," and the interviewer is viewed as "actively engaged in the interactional co-construction of the interview's content" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 15).

Marshall and Rossman (1999) detailed several limitations of qualitative interviewing. First, because interviews are interactive and intimate, cooperation between the participant and the researcher is key: "Interviewees may be unwilling or may be uncomfortable sharing all that the interviewer hopes to explore, or they may be unaware of the recurring patterns in their lives" (p. 110). Second, participants may not tell the truth and deceive the researcher to shield themselves. Also, the amount of data created from interviews can be overwhelming and cumbersome. Finally, data quality may be

problematic. According to the authors, there is the need for the researcher to not solely show their participants' perspectives but to also provide a theoretical or conceptual framework that supports the subjective nature of the study. For researchers working on a more objectivist tilt, triangulation of data through other methods would be appropriate.

Lindlof (1995) pinpointed several weaknesses of qualitative interviews. His included the uncertainty of participant's representations of truth and reality in the interview and the limitation of the interview to understand the situated use of language. For Lindlof, "lies, evasion, and audiotape" were the limitations of the interviews. Lindlof regarded lies as the "deliberate distortions of what a person believes or knows about the 'facts' of an event" (p. 192) and evasions as "deliberate efforts to conceal information or to sidestep the implications of a question" (p. 192). The intent to deceive is separate from the conditions and situations where participants confuse and mislead themselves and others. This unintentional deception is not a ruse concocted for show, or to dissuade, or to fabricate a more grandiose lifestyle. Lindlof argued that it stemmed from "ignorance of key information, a psychological dependency that inhibits their normal powers of judgment, or an obliviousness to taken-for-granted features of their lives. The unintentional deception is no less a problem for the researcher; it may be less actively defended by the participant, but it will be defended nonetheless" (p. 192). Also, Lindlof considered recording equipment as obtrusive during the interview session and a conduit for heightened formality. However, the gains of having the equipment were valuable. What the recording device achieved was a full transcript of the talk, and the recorder allowed the researcher to participate more freely in the interview rather than taking copious notes.

I overcame the limitations noted by Marshall and Rossman by engaging in several strategies. I established rapport with my participants, but I was cognizant and careful of the "paradox of intimacy" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 195). The paradox of intimacy is achieved when the high degree of trust established between a participant and the researcher implodes, curtailing subsequent research work within a community or with the participant. I attempted to put the participants at ease, helped them to understand that I empathized with their perspective, and respected what they said. To build rapport, I gave the participants clear and honest reasons why they were contacted, the goals of the project, my reasons for doing this project, what I hoped to accomplish for the field and for future practitioners through this work, and how the interview would be conducted (Lindlof, 1995). Also, I self-disclosed when necessary in an effort to engage the participant. At the beginning of the interviews or whenever appropriate, I inserted bits of information about myself into the conversation, telling them who I was and where I was situated. I let them know that I was a heterosexual Black female, that I was 27 years old at the time of the research and working on my doctorate, and that I had little experience in public relations—three internships and an 8-month, part-time job while in graduate school. Most of the participants appreciated the revelations, wanting to know more and referring back and linking their story to my experience. Based on Kong, Mahoney, and Plummer's (2002) research, gay male research participants want to know the researcher's perspective and to know his or her orientation regarding the research and the LBGT community before opening up and before being interviewed. I was willing to express myself, be open about my direction and goals, and be willing to express intimate details about myself. I also displayed empathy to identify with my participants, to show respect

for their emotional states, and to engage them in this research project (Ellis & Berger, 2002). Dunbar, Rodriguez, and Parker (2000) suggested that tabling all personal experiences and enacting a neutral façade with participants from certain racial and ethnic groups would inhibit the pursuit of rich data. Both the participant and the researcher must be willing to disclose mutually.

To overcome Marshall and Rossman's and Lindlof's limitations, I selected participants who have "thorough enculturation" (Spradley, 1979) in an organization and who have had sufficient participation and engagement in organization life—critical decisions, networks, events, and routines. This was to ensure that the participants could provide me with valuable and rich detail and so their time would not be wasted. Also, to ensure the willingness of the participants to participate in the research, I emphasized the IRB protocols and procedures I must follow. I directed their attention to the phone number and e-mail address of the IRB office on-campus if they had any concerns or complaints.

Also, I highlighted the steps taken to ensure confidentiality and the security of the data. These steps included not identifying participants by their real names or actual jobs in my transcripts and in my dissertation and locking up all transcripts and audiotapes in a drawer accessible to only myself and my advisor. Also, all hard-copy communication between my participants and me were filed and secured, and no electronic files were stored on a publicly accessible computer. All tapes, computer files, and documents were stored, secured, and destroyed according to the guidelines of the University of Maryland and the American Psychological Association.

Regarding the allotment of time, I was accommodating, considerate, and flexible. If I promised that the interview was to last a certain time period, I remained true to my promise. If a participant needed to leave for whatever circumstance, I made accommodations for them and used a shortened interview guide or rescheduled with the participant to continue the interview session.

Dealing with Sensitive Topics

Siebert and Stanley (1988) defined socially sensitive research as the following: studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research. For example, a study that examines the relative merits of day care for infants against full-time care by the mother can have broad social implications and thus can be considered socially sensitive. Similarly, studies aimed at examining the relation between gender and mathematical ability also have significant social implications.

(p. 49)

Seiber and Stanley defined socially sensitive research rather broadly and linked the term sensitive research with controversial research (Lee & Renzetti, 1993). Lee and Renzetti (1993) defined a sensitive research topic as one that had the potential to be threatening for both the researcher and the researched and will have some types of consequences for both parties. My interviews combined an assortment of sensitive topics—power, identity, race, sexual orientation, discrimination, and gender—that some participants were uncomfortable discussing. The sensitive nature of these topics required me to broach these questions with humility, eloquence, and trepidation in order to learn and understand

more about practitioners' experiences, yet I acknowledged that I had difficulties in completely and fully articulating the experiences of certain practitioners.

H. J. Rubin and I. S. Rubin (1995) outlined several strategies for asking sensitive questions. During the interview, the interviewer should pay close attention to the spaces and gaps in the conversation where the participant avoided answering part of the question. The interviewer should always come back and ask about the issue that the interviewer had trouble answering. H. J. Rubin and I. S. Rubin also suggested summarizing the information learned in the interview but inserting incorrect information or misstating the facts to get participants to tell their perspective or version of the unfolding events. Also, the interviewer should "throw out the rabbit." According to H.J. Rubin and I.S. Rubin, "to throw out the rabbit" means the researcher must engage in a series of questions that hint at a sensitive topic without actually addressing or directly asking about the topic. Using these strategies, I obtained the content and observations I needed.

Since I was not a member of many of the communities I interviewed and because I do not have first-hand experience with some of these issues in public relations, I am an outsider. Therefore, I was cautious in my presentation of the questions and my reactions to my participants' answers. I was cautious in my phrasing of questions, my use of terminology if I was outside of my community, and my reuse of words and jargon used by the practitioner if he or she used it in conversation. Also, as Denzin (2005) clarified, I worked for the empowerment of my participants, but I tried and attempted to not "Otherize" them in my work, e.g., speaking for them when they are unable to speak for

themselves and pressing upon them "frozen, essential terms" (p. 935) of race, gender, and sexual orientation identities.

One way that I was cautious was that I was aware of my participants' presentation of themselves and their experiences. As participants discussed strategies of identity management such as passing or concealment, I had to consider how to delicately probe these topics. Also, as the conversation progressed and a rhythm and familiarity developed, facades fell, and practitioners were able to switch roles in my presence, dropping one role and revealing another role to me. Theories of the flesh provide a backdrop for understanding how people who exist outside of the majority culture's status and boundaries respond and react to circumstances. Moraga and Anzaldúa (1983) considered a theory of the flesh "one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity" (p. 23). Madison (1993) called these theories "the root of our beginnings and the root of our understandings" (p. 214). These understandings provide the philosophical underpinnings of certain instances particular to one group or to their "everyday knowledge" (P. H. Collins, 2000). As Madison surmised, "The early quotidian experiences of the people we knew were our 'first sight,' and it is through them that we began to name and theorize the world" (p. 214). My participants name and theorize the world from their own place and from their own location, and cautiously I ventured forward into their space to understand their point of view.

Also, I was conscious and mindful of certain deceptions in the language of my participants: "the double-voiced utterance" (Arthos, 2001, p. 43), "signifying" (Gates, 1988, p. 47), and culturally intimate humor (Cooper, 2003, p. 514). Rooted in the work of

Gates and Bakhtin, the “double-voice utterance” of which Arthos wrote is “a reflection of the imposed structure of the divided allegiance in black life” (p. 34). Gates defined signifying as the “double-voiced discourse that critiques the nature of ‘(white) meaning’ by consciously vacating the white signifier and substituting a signified that stands for the system of rhetorical strategies’ peculiar to the black vernacular tradition” (Jones, 1997, p. 264-265; Gates, 1997, p. 47). Cooper, in his analysis of the sitcom *Will and Grace*, contrasted culturally intimate humor with protest humor, a form of humor that mocks mainstream society while leaving out its own subculture in its analysis. Culturally intimate humor draws on its own cultural folklore for inspiration and finds delight in cultural stereotypes and in pulling those stereotypes to pieces. According to Cooper, culturally intimate humor “relies on the everyday foibles of individuals within a culture” (p. 514).

All of these concepts are linked to the idea of the trickster. As the interviewer, I considered “trickster discourse” (Dunbar et al., 2002). The words of the trickster serve to misdirect the other person engaged in the discussion: the interviewer, the interrogator, the master, the oppressor, the person in a dominant position within the social hierarchy. However, the trickster does not operate solely to confuse. As Martin (2005) noted, redemption and performance are dual motives for the trickster: “it is a performance that creates ambiguity and inversion by offering alternative interpretations of experience” (p. 209). As the subversive element that challenges the hegemony within a culture and offers alternate structures for what is currently in place, the trickster can produce fundamental change. Martin noted this facet of this trickster, writing that

When confronted with injustice, the trickster moves beyond the restraints of “conventional history” (Hardin 26), reinterpreting it, and opening “an outlet for voicing protest against...social order and their religion” (Ballinger 23). Subverting the dominant paradigm by confronting a social or ethical issue, bringing about an introspective response, and showing that culture has “lost essential values” (Ballinger 22), the trickster compels society to look at the inappropriateness of their societal practice and decide what responsibility they have to change it (p. 211).

The value of acknowledging and understanding the operations of the trickster is that as a researcher, you must be aware of yourself and your social situation (e.g., race, class, gender, and sexual orientation) and how those issues affect the interview. Dunbar et al. discussed the issue of “creative interviewing.” This is when the researcher finds a narrative place or a location that the interviewee and the researcher share; for that brief period of time when the researcher and the participant are together, they have a commonality, participating in a common, mutual space. Also, I always questioned definitions, terms, meanings, and sayings, never trusting my own interpretation. I asked for clarifications and was willing to let my participants speak for their own responses.

To establish a real dialogue and conversation in the interview, I integrated "difference as a dynamic concept" (de Monteflores, 1993) by incorporating empathy. Empathy played an integral role in the discussion of sensitive topics and how I approached participants. De Monteflores (1993) considered empathy as "identification that is mediated by real feelings for a real person" (p. 239). Empathetic interviewing revises the traditional, neutral standard of interviewing. Fontana and Frey (2005) argued

that openness and the revelation of personal feelings and situations emphasized taking a stance. The researcher must be present, active, and involved in the research as a participant. Empathetic interviewing is a "method of mortality because it attempts to restore the sacredness of humans before addressing any theoretical or methodological concerns" (p. 697). Empathy cannot happen unless a relationship and a real dialogue are established. Both parties—the participant and researcher—must be willing to accept the limitations of the other, and in this research, my participants and I did.

Participants

Sampling

The nonprobability sampling strategy I used was purposive and convenient. The technique I used for generating this sample was a “snowball.” Lindlof (1995) defined snowball sampling as the "use of an informant to locate other people with characteristics of interest to the researcher and from whom the researcher can generate data" (p. 127). Potter (1996) wrote that it is a matter of terms because the procedure will lead to the same outcome: “In almost all instances the terms are synonymous because purposive samples are chosen because they are relevant sources of evidence of the phenomenon” (p. 107). An accumulative type of sampling, the researcher relies upon the participants to lead them to other sources.

Professional Organizations. I used contacts and professionals within the professional organizations of which I am a member (e.g., National Black Public Relations Society, Public Relations Society of America, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, Hispanic Public Relations Association, National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association) and my network of professional contacts to locate participants. From there, I

asked those who are participating if they knew of other professionals who self-identify as one or more of my groupings and who might be interested in participating. Then, I contacted those individuals.

For my research, the ideal practitioner was one who had at least three years of experience in a public relations, communication management, or strategic communication position. However, I interviewed practitioners who had a year of professional experience in his or her organization as long as he or she had a public relations major, public relations or strategic communication internships that totaled more than one year in addition to their job, and were integral to the functioning of the public relations department. Other key demographic criteria important to this research were racioethnicity and sexual orientation. The practitioners had to identify himself or herself as: heterosexual African American or Hispanic males or females; White lesbian, gay male, or bisexual; or African American or Hispanic lesbian, gay male, or bisexual public relations practitioners.

To start this research, I obtained the membership directories and e-mail lists of the Black Public Relations Society, Public Relations Society of America, Hispanic Public Relations Association, California Chicano News Media Association, and National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association. In conjunction with the above listed associations, I contacted practitioners listed in the PRSA Directory of Public Relations Firms, published in 2000. Although this listing was out of date, it did provide some leads and contacts. I sorted through the lists and eliminated all advertising agencies, consulting firms, journalists, and students. The remaining contact information was used to distribute my recruitment appeal.

If the membership list was not available, I contacted the membership chair, executive director, or president and asked for his or her help with my project. By enlisting the chair or executive director, I hoped to gain credibility and legitimacy for my project. Because all public relations practitioners were not affiliated with the field's professional organizations, I also used my personal contacts to find practitioners. For example, I have several former classmates who are working in the public relations industry, and I asked them for assistance.

Following the lead of Tillery-Larkin (1999), I approached groups that were not traditionally considered "public relations" organizations. Organizations such as the Detroit Black Communication Association and Association of Black Media Workers contain large groups of minority practitioners who are members and who work in different areas of communication management. From the Human Rights Campaign web site, I had access to 272 employee network groups at universities, nonprofits, and corporations. Employee network groups are coalitions of lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees that, according to Raeburn (2004), act as institutional activists. These groups have four main goals: "to provide support, socializing, and networking opportunities for members; to gain official corporate recognition; to educate employees on sexual orientation issues; and to bring about gay-inclusive policies and practices" (p. 13). With these groups, I contacted the listed officers or the organizational contact for every major corporation, nonprofit, and college or university listed on the index in an effort to reach any public relations practitioners who may be involved with this organization to request his or her participation or ask if the practitioner could lead me to other potential participants.

The need to reach and connect with groups dissimilar from me was a relevant concern. With this research, which explores dimensions of diversity in public relations including race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, I moved beyond the typical public relations groups to locate lesbian, gay male, and bisexual practitioners. I am a member of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, an association of journalists and media professionals that has a Washington, D.C. chapter and an active national public relations subsection, and the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Affinity Group of PRSA. To start integrating and immersing myself into the Washington, D.C. chapter of NLGJA, I have added myself to the local chapter list server and the national public relations list server, all in an effort to meet and interact with local practitioners and media professionals.

I joined several groups in the process of preparing for this dissertation research. The groups I joined (and in which I have continued my membership since finishing data collection) are the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, Gay and Lesbian Affinity Group of the Public Relations Society of America, National Hispanic Journalists Association, and Hispanic Public Relations Association. I joined these organizations because I support the organizations and the causes of the organization. When I first joined the organization, I applied for student memberships. I did self-identify with NLGJA as a heterosexual African-American female; with the National Hispanic Journalists Association, I identified as a monolingual African-American/Black woman whose country of origin is the United States. I answered every question regarding personal and professional demographics truthfully.

My intent was not to secure membership in these societies and groups for the sole purpose of securing data or to lurk on mailing list servers. I did this as a move of solidarity with other minority media professionals and to understand the needs, barriers, and constraints facing other diverse journalists and media professionals. Furthermore, I was interested in expanding my own professional network outside of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) and the National Black Public Relations Society (NBPRS).

Extending beyond the organizations for journalists and media professionals, I located Out in TV and Film, a list for LGBT professionals in television and film; FH Out Front, a Fleishman-Hillard international team dedicated to reaching the gay and lesbian community; other lists dedicated to gay and lesbian practitioners in the United States; POWERUP!, an organization of lesbians at all levels in the film industry; and the various LGBT networking organizations in banking and finance, entertainment, medicine, and other fields. If available, I joined electronic mail groups and sent out my request for participants through those lists.

There are drawbacks to sampling practitioners from LGBT-oriented organizations such as the ones listed. According to Griffith and Hebl (2002) who surveyed members of gay rights organizations, their results may be skewed because their participants may have been more "out" than other LGBT workers. They noted a research conundrum that has been a problem for other management researchers: "'Closeted' gay and lesbian workers are more difficult to identify and may be more reluctant to participate, a problem that research using gay and lesbian participants generally faces" (p. 1197). Griffith and Hebl tackled this by stressing the need for "out" and less "out" participants in the recruitment

phase and getting participants from different sources. To find less “out” participants or “closeted” LGB participants during the research, I asked participants if they knew of other practitioners who were along the continuum of outness and if they would be willing to participate. I also contacted the LGBT working group contacts at various companies and asked those individuals to forward this e-mail to all members in the company.

Recruitment. To recruit my participants, I contacted the practitioners by telephone, e-mail, or both methods. I informed them of the objectives of the study and asked them for their participation (see Appendix A for the e-mail solicitation letter). I emphasized three main points. First, this research is essential to understanding and acknowledging the barriers, the opportunities, and the complex realities that some employees of different ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations face in corporate settings and, specifically, in public relations. Second, this research will contribute to the body of knowledge in public relations and communication. There has not been much research conducted on minorities in public relations, leaving large spaces in the research paradigm; this research is an attempt to fill those spaces. Third, this research will benefit students of color and LGB students who will enter the field, allowing the participants a chance to convey their experiences. It is an opportunity to give themselves a voice and an instrument to reveal the strategies that have helped them move through their careers.

I wanted to ensure a cross-section of practitioners from various organizational settings (i.e., nonprofit, corporate, educational, and governmental) and from various U.S. cities with diverse populations. I conducted face-to-face interviews with participants in the Washington, D.C.-metropolitan area. Face-to-face interviews capture more non-verbal accomplishments and can create an interpersonal dynamic not easily achieved

through the mouthpieces and wiring of a phone. I conducted telephone interviews with participants across the United States, focusing on major cities where large populations of African Americans, Hispanics, and LGB individuals live. After looking at the Census and Human Rights Campaign population data and cross-referencing the cities where large numbers of African Americans, Hispanics, and lesbians and gay men live, these major cities include Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and New York. By the end of the process, I interviewed participants from the following cities: Washington, D.C.; New York; Philadelphia; Atlanta; Miami; Indianapolis; Detroit; Jacksonville, Florida; Los Angeles; Dallas; San Francisco; Seattle; and Houston.

Demographic Information and Insights

From February to May 2006, a total of 51 public relations practitioners were interviewed. The average age of the participants was 36.5, and slightly more women (n=27) than men (n=24) participated in the research. Because of the years of experience, age, and organizational structure, the titles of the participants varied: executive vice president, director of communication, public information officer, and specialist. The majority of practitioners were in middle and senior management. Three had between 1 to 5 years of public relations experience. A large number of participants—sixteen participants—chalked up 20 or more years of professional experience in public relations. Almost all of the participants had a bachelor's degree; of those that reported in which academic department or college they received their degree, 15 received a degree in journalism; three stated that they received a degree in public relations. Four participants received degrees in communication and English, respectively. Practitioners worked in a variety of industries—automotive, travel and tourism, beauty and cosmetics,

entertainment, health and medicine, education, government and public works, and non-profits. Besides working for major corporations and agencies, 13 practitioners were entrepreneurs, having created firms and consultancies of their own.

The majority of the people interviewed were lesbians, gay males, and bisexual practitioners: a total of 26—1 bisexual female, 6 lesbians, and 19 gay males. Of the gay males interviewed, 2 were of color: 1 self-identified as African American, and the other as Hispanic. None of the lesbians interviewed identified themselves outside of the racial category of Caucasian/White. Of the African American/Black practitioners interviewed, 16 were female, and 4 were male. One of the African American/Black male participants self-identified as gay, and none of the African American/ Black females interviewed self-identified as lesbian. A smaller number of Hispanic practitioners than expected were interviewed; a total of six were interviewed. Three were female, and three were male. One self-identified as gay, and the remainder self-identified as heterosexual.

Procedures

Between February 2006 and May 2006, I conducted interviews that varied in format and length of time with my participants. Unless the interviewee felt comfortable meeting elsewhere, in-person interviews were held in private locations such as the interviewee's home or office. Under such conditions when the participant had to meet in a public location, I found a location that gave the participant and myself the most comfort and privacy. Telephone interviews were conducted from my apartment. No incentives for participation were available to offer to the practitioners.

For the telephone interviews, I faxed or mailed consent forms and asked for the participant to sign and fax the forms back to me before the interview. At the start of the

in-person interviews, I opened the interview by asking the participant to read over the informed consent form and explaining the purpose of informed consent. Once the participant signed and agreed to be audiotaped, I started the interview with grand tour questions. Then, I moved into the more substantial questions that related to the research questions and content areas explored in the literature review. At some points in the interview, the participants were unclear or gave vague statements. To follow up on these, I used probes to gather additional information and stories.

With a semi-structured protocol, I was open to different streams of conversation. If the participant felt the need to expand upon an issue or dedicate more time to storytelling, we diverged from the scripted questions and probes and followed the tangential discussion as long as it was relevant to the Research Questions. At the conclusion of the interview, I asked the participants if he or she had anything to add or if I missed anything major in our discussion. I also asked if they knew of any other practitioners who fit my criteria and who would be willing to talk. I blocked out a three-hour time period to conduct each interview and also do the appropriate follow-up memos and observer comments. The average time for the interviews was an hour. All interviews were recorded, and all interviews were transcribed. I transcribed 30 interviews, and I hired a transcriptionist to complete the remaining interviews. I read through the transcripts and listened to the other tapes to check for accuracy.

Instrumentation

I conducted the interviews using a semi-structured protocol of questions (H. J. Rubin & I. S. Rubin, 1995). This format allowed me to introduce the topics and guide the discussion through specific questions and probes (H. J. Rubin & I. S. Rubin, 1995).

However, the questions were open-ended, and the goal of this interviewing was to let the participants "tell their own story in their own terms" (McCracken, 1988, p. 34).

Divergence from the protocol was necessary and appropriate because it helped the respondents divulge and become more open about the substance of their experiences.

The protocol has three sections (Appendix B). The first section has the "grand tour questions" (Spradley, 1979; McCracken, 1988; H. J. Rubin & I. S. Rubin, 1995) that cover the participants' background and are essential for building rapport. Grand tour questions ask the interviewee to describe the mundane activities or procedures, establishing an overview of entry into the field, work, process, and organizational culture (H. J. Rubin & I. S. Rubin, 1995). Some of the questions in this section tied into the research question regarding mentoring and organizational roles. The second section dealt with identity and identity management at work. The questions in the second section were relevant to the concepts and the research questions exploring practitioners' constraints, challenges, and opportunities at work with regard to their identity and the diversity of their organization. Of interest to me were the participants' perceptions of themselves in their job function and roles and the possibility of incongruence between their ascribed and avowed identities and their role as a public relations practitioner. The third section covered power at work. The questions in the third section connect to the research questions regarding the meaning-making of the concept of power and the practicality of the Excellence Theory's conceptualization of power in the lives of practitioners. In this section, I asked practitioners about their understanding and perceptions of power. Also, these questions refer back to the literature on power explored in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Data Analysis

For my analysis, I used the constant comparative method from grounded theory. Grounded theory is an inductive approach that generates theoretical frameworks from data gathered through social research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2000). One does not proceed linearly through the research and analytic phases in grounded theory and in the constant comparative method. Data collection and analysis are done simultaneously with the researcher performing the tasks of analysis and collecting fluidly and jointly (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Data analysis in the constant comparative method occurs in four phases. First, the researcher starts by comparing and contrasting incidents in the data. Incidents are significant events, objects, actions, or interactions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Second, all incidents should be compared against previous and new incidents in the groups of data within the same category of data-derived concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and within different categories to strengthen the categories, the dimensions, and the properties. In the third step, the researcher integrates or intertwines the categories and their properties (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The categories start to make theoretical sense. At the fourth step, as the irrelevant properties and categories are trimmed, the theory is delimited in its applicability and solidified. I did not conduct the fourth step for my study.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) presented three coding procedures based on the constant comparative methods that provide greater clarity, specificity, and detail on how to proceed with analysis. Open coding, the first level of coding, is the discovery of initial concepts, dimensions, and properties in the data. Doing a microanalysis or a thorough

line-by-line reading of the data, the researcher codes for themes, patterns, and occurrences of meaning. Axial coding, the second level of coding, is the establishment of relationships between the categories, properties, and the dimensions. The coding is done around the "axis" or category. Both open coding and axial coding can be done at the same time. The final level of coding is selective coding; the researcher must integrate the codes together to form a cohesive theory. Also, the researcher must choose a central category that has analytic power and sufficiently binds the research together.

As I generated themes and dimensions, I did not force my participants' voices or quotations in any preexisting framework. If possible, I searched for *vivo* codes or names for concepts that came from the participants (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). If these were not available, I used concepts from the research literature to describe the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Throughout this process, I kept a journal and wrote memos, describing the process of research and my reactions to research. The memo and the diary emerge from the same strain of reflexive qualitative insight. However, diaries are considered personal narrative, which define a turning point or "epiphanal event" (Denzin, 1989). The personal narrative is a significant event in someone's life. For me, the writing of the diary was important to the experiences I was being granted access to. I wrote about any unresolved emotions and my reactions to my participants. Following the lead of Kanuha (1997) and Foldy (2002), I kept a journal of my personal experiences of this process throughout the entire dissertation process. Charmaz (2000) discussed the need for the researcher to gain sufficient depth and understanding in their work "to clarify, rather than challenge respondents' views about reality" (p. 525). The issues within this study lingered with me

and have had a significant impact on my professional and personal life. As awkward and clumsy as it may be, this diary of personal experience with this project was a reflexive account of how this work is changing me as an entire person, not just as a researcher. Also, this diary made me more vulnerable to my participants. Although they will not have access to it, this constant reminder and exercise in reflexivity exposed my own biases, preconceptions, strengths, and weaknesses as a researcher. This journal, in turn, helped me to tackle some issues and put in focus the goal of this research project.

As I coded, I wrote memos to discuss discrepancies among my themes and in the relationship between my themes, tips on how to improve my interviewing skills, or other general thoughts about the research process. Memoing is the appropriate place for these thoughts and emotions (Kleinmann & Copp, 1993), and it is the process that Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss and Corbin (1998), and Charmaz (2000) encouraged. Memos are appropriate for reflective and analytic thought (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Charmaz (2000), memoing is more than a slapdash activity between collecting and writing. Rather, "memo writing aids us in linking analytic interpretation with empirical reality. We bring raw data right into our memo so that we maintain those connections and examine them directly" (p. 517).

During the three stages of coding, I used Miles and Huberman's (1994) predictor-outcome matrices to guide my data analysis and help me with understanding thematic patterns. This type of matrix is explanatory, explaining what antecedent predicted the criterion variable. My main outcome or criterion variable is power, and the antecedent variables that will contribute to the criterion variable will emerge from the data.

I scrutinized all responses that were internally inconsistent with the participant's responses, especially factual errors. H. J. Rubin and I. S. Rubin (1995) wrote that the task of the qualitative researcher is "not to eliminate inconsistencies, but to make sure you understand why they occur" (p. 87). My intent with double-checking my participants' responses was to safeguard the internal and external coherence of my data. I wanted to be able to articulate why the contradictions occurred and what those contradictions mean. To do this, I probed my participants for deeper, more complex answers and to explain the contradiction. For my credibility, I must make the attempt to explore the contradiction. According to H. J. Rubin and I. S. Rubin, this exploration can add depth to the researcher's understanding of the culture and the participants and may increase transparency. They wrote, "In demonstrating consistency, the researcher need not show that people's beliefs are fully coherent or that interviewees told some idealized version of the truth. But the researcher does have to show that he or she bothered to check out inconsistencies" (pp. 89-90).

Additionally, I looked for negative cases and "outliers" in an attempt to disconfirm my conclusions. The reason why I looked for negative evidence was to disconfirm the conclusions I had drawn. "When a preliminary conclusion is in hand, the tactic is to say, 'Do any data oppose this conclusion, or are any inconsistent with this conclusion?'" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 271). For this research, this might include lesbian and gay professionals who have not experienced discrimination based on sexual orientation; out lesbian and gay professionals of color who have not had trouble maintaining power; or racial and ethnic minorities who have managed to attain powerful roles in their organizations in spite of attempts of pigeonholing.

Ethical Considerations

Due to the reflexive, sensitive, and consuming nature of this qualitative research, I was and remain deeply concerned with the ethical issues. Marshall and Rossman (1999) stated that the qualitative researcher must anticipate issues of negotiating entry to the site and with participants, reciprocity, role maintenance, power, and informed consent. To begin, I presented my work and myself honestly and in some way that makes sense to group members (Agar, 1996). I did encounter some resistance and was regarded with some caution initially. Individually, several participants were hesitant in speaking with me. Some were ambivalent about the length of time it would take; others were more concerned about confidentiality and about having their opinions and thoughts leak directly back to their superiors. I was asked for my credentials and verification of the study's viability. I acquiesced to the questioning concerns and demands of the participants, confirming the veracity of the study and answering many e-mails about who I was and what I was going to do with the research until they said yes. Most of them who asked questions agreed to participate.

One of the disadvantages of this research was that the relationship between the researcher and participant must be maintained across racioethnic, sexual orientation, and age lines. Although all research relationships shift between phases of trust, openness, and withdrawal (McCracken, 1988; H. J. Rubin & I. S. Rubin, 1995), some participants were hesitant to discuss issues related to their experiences with racioethnicity or sexual orientation with me because I was a heterosexual African-American woman. I anticipated and expected that. Initially, I was cautious about what I said; I did not reveal much. I learned my lesson in the first few weeks of my research when two research participants

personally confronted me, wanting to know if I was a lesbian. They did not know where I was located in terms of their community: was I in or was I out? In both cases, the question was politely raised toward the end of the conversation, and I answered the question: politely, firmly, and cautiously. In the back of my mind, I wondered if this would affect my research and the rapport I had established? It didn't. It encouraged further questions and further discussion. At that point, I realized I should disclose at the beginning of the conversation so there would not be any lingering questions or doubts and the conversation could flow a bit smoother. I realized what a great effect that would have on my data; if my participants didn't know from where I was coming or who I was, they couldn't trust my motivation. I agree with Seidman (1991), who wrote: "In our society with its history of racism, researchers and participants of different racial backgrounds face difficulty establishing an effective interviewing relationship" (p. 76). Not only is race a barrier, but also class, gender, and sexual orientation are barriers that can impede the communication. However, disclosure and revelation—unveiling parts of yourself, especially in telephone interviews—is necessary to create rapport.

From then, I was upfront and honest with my participants. At the beginning of my interviews, I stated who I was, my orientation, and my intent with the data. I asked if they had any questions for me or about my research, willing to take the time to answer in depth anything they wanted to know. It helped to transform the space into one that was welcoming, safe, and open for honest dialogue between the two of us, the researcher and participant. Understanding the researcher's role and place in the research is paramount. Not only am I the instrument in analyzing the data, but I am also the tool used to retrieve

information from the participants. If the participants could not trust me, how could I obtain quality data?

The visible aspects of my identity (e.g., my skin color) cannot be negotiated or hidden. However, some aspects of my identity were highlighted either in verbal conversation or in written discussion (i.e., graduate student, racial background, interest in diversity research) and others were not (i.e., age, limited work experience). However, I followed Agar's (1996) suggestion for distance reduction. I told my participants that I have done previous research with public relations practitioners, and to gain credibility with them, I did tell them that I have enjoyed the status of "outsider insider," "token," or "minority practitioner" in my previous job and internships.

Once I gained access, I did not want my participants to see me as an all-knowing creature there to tap them for answers and then leave. Instead, I agreed with Reinharz (1992) and other qualitative, feminist methodologists who advocate for less hierarchical and dominating relationships between the researcher and the researched. Regardless of my desire to flatten my power as a researcher or to engage in egalitarian research characterized by authenticity, reciprocity, and trust (M. M. Gergen & K. J. Gergen, 2000), it did not happen. Power differentials still meandered throughout the research process. My participants were always vulnerable to me. Eventually this dissertation will have my name alone on its spine, so this project will not and cannot be fully co-authored. I cannot claim cooperativeness or full collaboration because this project has too many imprints and minds in it (a dissertation chair, a dissertation committee, my own, the research participants)—all constructing and reworking sections of the project. The

participants' voices may be obliterated, diluted, forsaken, or modified for the sake of expediency, propriety, or politics.

When considering the ethics of this project, the positions of Black feminist thought (P. H. Collins, 2000) were appropriate in developing my role and place in the research process. For P. H. Collins, the ethic of caring is "talking with the heart" (p. 262); elemental to this research were empathy and the use of emotions in dialogue. As a Black feminist researcher who is exploring sensitive and explosive issues, I developed the capacity for empathy and being able to empty out my participants' expressed joys, grief, anxiety, hatred, and suspicion from my participants at the end of each interview. In Black feminist thought, emotions are central and appropriate in dialogue. "Emotion indicates that a speaker believes in the validity of an argument" (p. 263). The avoidance of feelings pushes the qualitative researcher closer to positivist, objective researchers who only "describe their observations instead of their subjective states" (p. 19). Black feminist thought does not see emotion and intellect as distinct.

In writing the results of the study, I wrote against Othering, consciously rethinking and approaching the way I inscribed my participants' voices into my research. Fine (1995) argued that, instead of giving voice to the Other, one must listen to the layered, textured voices of the Others as the situated, gendered, raced, and classed constructors of knowledge. To achieve this, I negotiated how and when to situate and privilege which voices. Also, I was sensitive to the fluidity of identities and to the possibility of encountering essentialist researchers who berate me for not staying to my own kind (e.g., only people of color should do research on people of color; only LGB researchers should do research on LGB issues).

Validity

Kvale (1995) presented three types of validity for qualitative research. In the concept of validity as craftsmanship, Kvale stressed that the credibility of the researcher is paramount. The researcher must validate his or her research through checking, questioning, and theorizing. To enhance the validity of this study, I prolonged my time in the field to increase my rapport and to better understand the phenomena I am studying. I debriefed with peers and used member checks (Lindlof, 1995), especially with groups I am not a member of (e.g., white lesbian, Black male, White gay male). Also, I used thick description (Geertz, 1973) to describe and tell as much as possible in my descriptions. To achieve this type of validity, I created vivid descriptions of my scenes and gave my readers a sense of authenticity or "being there."

The second type of validity is communicative validity where scholars must dialogue, debate, and negotiate with other scholars in order to verify, test, and validate their knowledge claims. Communicative validity is similar to a tenet of Black feminist thought—the use of dialogue in the assessment of knowledge claims. As P. H. Collins (2000) summarized, "connectedness rather than separation is an essential component of the knowledge validation process" (p. 260). During the process of data gathering and analysis, I met with other scholars formally and informally to test my theoretical assumptions and claims. The outlets available on campus include the scholars associated with and the colloquia of the Center for Race, Gender, and Equity and dissertation support groups. Informally, I contacted other public relations and communication scholars who conduct research on power and identity issues and ask for their insight. I

asked my committee for guidance and assistance in the building and verification of my claims.

The final component of Kvale's (1995) validity is pragmatic validity. With pragmatic validity, the researcher is concerned with personally authenticating and solidifying the linkages and relationships at which he or she arrived. It is a process "to make true" (p. 248) all of things one said existed and claimed were possible. The researcher must go back to the transcripts, observer comments, field notes, memos, and all other materials and verify all the interpretations. As I conducted my data analysis, I did negative case analyses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and actively explored negative evidence and rival explanations that refuted my conclusions and my interpretations. The goal of the negative case analyses was to have confidence in my data.

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research findings and to offer my interpretations of the participants' words. As Wolcott (1994) stated, "Everything has the potential to be data, but nothing *becomes* data without the intervention of a researcher who takes note—and often makes note—of some things to the exclusion of others" (p. 4).

In general, findings revealed some particularly distinct themes. Black and Hispanic public relations practitioners and LGB practitioners encountered heterosexism, racism, sexism, and occasionally all of these issues of discrimination at the same time. As research participants encountered these barriers, they said they simultaneously resisted and enacted countermeasures to avoid those pitfalls. Power was perceived as having access to knowledge; access and control of financial resources; holding a seat in the dominant coalition; and having a high-ranking position in the organization. Some practitioners melded the concepts of influence and power together, believing that influence was a necessary antecedent of power. Some participants, however, considered power as patriarchal and as an entity shaped by Whiteness.

Participants achieved power and empowerment in their organizational roles through various avenues. Being mentored and mentoring not only served as an outlet and a way to connect to other members in the organization, but it was also a way to exert one's power and influence in organizational networks. Practitioners who were senior-level employees also achieved greater echelons of power, status, and empowerment in the organization through their ability to create and develop multicultural communication groups or work teams; these efforts allowed them the

opportunity to transform their physical, operational space and their emotive space in the corporate structure into something that was welcoming and appreciative of diversity. This also allowed them the opportunity to pick, develop, and groom teams, thus displaying their management and leadership skills and talent. The interviewed practitioners built and maintained affective and professional relationships and networks that helped to sustain them as they navigated through organizational life.

Below, particular findings are detailed according to each RQ they answer.

RQ1: How do minority public relations practitioners understand and make meaning of their raced, gendered, and sexual identities in their organizations? How and how well do practitioners negotiate and manage their identities in organizational settings?

The participants made meaning of their identities within the frameworks of power and discrimination. In other words, identities were viewed through lenses of experiences with discrimination, lack of power, and difference. During their professional careers, all of the participants had experienced some form of bigotry and discrimination at institutional and individual levels in their workplaces. Some practitioners faced subtle and complex institutional barriers they labeled as glass ceilings, lavender ceilings, and tokenism. Others were subjected to interpersonal biases and discrimination based on perceptions and stereotypes attributed by co-workers of minorities. Participants articulated these areas of discrimination specifically according to their identities of gender, race, or sexuality. In other words, some participants spoke specifically of sexism, some spoke only of racism, and others spoke of homophobia. In general, the

main themes that emerged from these discussions were: sexism and the glass ceiling; whether pigeonholing was common; everyday racism; homophobia; the “lavender ceiling”; lesbians as a rarity in public relations; tokenism; how difference can be associated with being “cool” at work; and diversity-friendly policies.

Sexism and the glass ceiling. Several women discussed glass ceiling experiences, but some did not classify them as sexism. The lesbians in my sample were more forthright in calling and claiming their experiences with institutional barriers as such. For one lesbian practitioner, she noted that a former employer accelerated the career trajectory of a gay male while her career path lingered in the same position for several years. The below quote from her illustrates how she considered this a function of her sex.

I'm just very, very sure that doing my work with [employer], had I been male, I would have been promoted to vice president much sooner than was being offered to me during the latter part of my time there, because my successor was a male. And he was the vice president within three years of his arrival, and they were only getting ready to provide me with the opportunity for that title after eight years. (European American lesbian, age 52, president/founder, agency)

Another female practitioner similarly labeled her former experience a “glass ceiling experience.”

Women were just not viewed as being capable of having promotable ideas. And being strategic planners, and offering suggestions to help the bottom

line of the business. They were seen as either window dressing or they were seen as clerical tactician, technician type worker bees who just worked long hours, cranked it out, smiled and did whatever they were told to do (Caucasian lesbian, age 51, associate professor, higher education)

Although she was closeted at the time, this participant felt that her gender contributed more to her lack of promotion at her manufacturing job than did her sexual orientation.

Varied perceptions of pigeonholing. Among all practitioners, pigeonholing and ghettoization were issues of slight concern. All of the practitioners of color and lesbians, gay male, and bisexual practitioners working in corporations, agencies, and nonprofits did not handle or coordinate exclusively multicultural or minority audience accounts or publics. Part of their responsibilities, at times, included efforts in assisting with targeted communication efforts to those audiences, but these were not day-to-day activities. Several initiated and launched marketing communication and public relations programs for multicultural or emerging publics, and many participated in the diversity or multicultural councils in their organizations along with outside community groups. These activities were not forced upon them by management or were thrust upon them as a part of their job function. These practitioners volunteered for these assignments and excitedly signed on to participate in the diversity communication initiatives. An example of this is a public relations counselor working for a manufacturing company. There were diversity outreach and communication efforts to the lesbian and gay community, but these efforts did not include him. So he approached the communication officers handling the endeavor:

So I actually got in touch with her for this last [trade show] that we did and asked her what gay and lesbian media she had who were coming in because I wanted to get more involved. So she let me know. And actually I had already been in touch with the two gay and lesbian media that she had coming in as guests of [corporation] for the show. But then she incorporated me into their activities as well, their dinners, their sessions.

(Caucasian gay male, age 33, manager of product communications, corporate)

Another practitioner in a small nonprofit was the only public relations person responsible for every communication-related piece originating from the organization. Yet, she also had a responsibility for making sure the public representation and face of the organization was diverse:

It's like this week when my boss said our photographer is coming for the next session. "Make sure that they get pictures of diversity." And in my mind I'm thinking, if it's diverse, you can't help but get it. Do you see what I'm saying? Like if there's real diversity there, the camera won't lie. It will be right there for the camera to get, so why am I pushing this?

(Black/African American heterosexual female, age 26, communications coordinator, nonprofit)

Among the lesbian, gay male, and bisexual practitioners, there was sensitivity about their sexual orientation as the only identity of value to the organization. Although several felt a need to bring their voice into discussions on diversity and how to attract other lesbians and gays to the organization, they did not want to become "the gay PR

practitioner.” According to one practitioner who is the executive vice president of his agency, “That's just a piece of who I am. But I increasingly became comfortable bringing all of that to the workplace..... I didn't want to get typecast as, oh well he's only – he's the person that deals with gay issues or whatever. I'd like to think of myself as a damn good, solid practitioner of public relations who just happens to be gay.”
(White gay male, executive vice president, agency)

Getting compartmentalized into a single job function or identity as the minority public relations specialist was an issue for practitioners of color also. Several young African American female practitioners had been advised and forewarned early in their careers of the pitfalls of doing African American or multicultural communication solely. One practitioner who majored in African American studies and public relations considered a career in African American-focused public relations but reconsidered after talking with her college professor:

And my professor said, “You’ve got to be realistic about that. You want to work for a corporation and handle all their issues related to the media in general, not just the black media.” He said, “You never just want to just pigeonhole yourself.” And I thought I would do Black PR because I’ve always been very community focused and I thought it was going to be the best of both worlds. And I’m so glad I didn’t do that because I think it probably would have burned me out and I would have felt some frustrations. (African American heterosexual female, age 32, manager, corporate)

Another practitioner recalled her experience with another agency where she was pushed into certain account and not appointed to others because of race. This has an effect on her billing hours with the firm.

As you know in public relations, it's all about billable hours. And so when people are compromising my billable hours just because they don't have any work for the black girl because there's no black projects going on, then you know, that didn't really work for me. (Black heterosexual female, age 28, account supervisor, public relations agency)

Others patiently rejected the idea of doing multicultural communication. For example, a practitioner who worked in public affairs in Washington would not work in certain multicultural or minority communication positions in specific legislative offices because they would “put you in a box” from which you could not escape:

There are staffers who want to work for a member who's in the leadership. What's the job we always get? Community outreach. [laughs] I would shoot myself. Or Director of African American Media. What the hell does that mean? Why can't I be the director of media for you? Why can't I be campaign manager for you? Because I don't represent America. Very, very frustrating. (Black heterosexual female, age 26, director of communication, government/public works)

For practitioners who owned their own firms, getting buttonholed into multicultural or minority work when they performed a range of activities was a concern.

I think that's where I am actually. Because when you look at my client list under [name of company], you see that I was doing work for very large PR firms like Burston-Marsteller and Shandwick Public Relations. I was doing work for Ringling Brothers and Feld Enterprises. The bottom line is that they all hired me prior to my being out. And you know, they're not calling me now because all they have to do is a Google search under my name in [name of city] and suddenly it's all over the Internet, here's this major queer person. Because I have a very high profile. My suspicion is that they definitely would want to ask the question, "Are we interested in hiring somebody who is that out?" 'Cause I'm very out. (European American lesbian and queer, age 52, president/founder, agency)

A few independent practitioners avoided the pigeonholing dilemma by refusing to promote their firms as multicultural firms:

I don't look at myself as being Hispanic. I look at myself as being a communications professional, a crisis manager, a business connector. And that's basically why people hire me. Now some do hire me for Hispanic work. And that's fine. But I don't advertise it. It comes to me. (Hispanic heterosexual male, age 59, chairman and CEO, public relations agency)

Regardless of location, title, and experience, practitioners working in agencies, corporations, and for themselves experienced the limitations of organizational and professional bias and discrimination. Practitioners did not fulfill all of the pigeonholing functions as indicated by Tillery-Larking (1999), yet some practitioners did encounter

organizational beliefs and institutional assumptions that they should be, do and fulfill certain goals and roles related to their race that were not related to their job responsibility. Several practitioners realized before they got too immersed into the profession what they needed to avoid in order to escape being branded as a “race-only” practitioner. Although the majority of practitioners did not handle race-based or LGB-specific accounts only, they remained vigilant to not get stuck or pulled into only doing that specific type of work. Practitioners were comfortable communicating with their particular communities and working on accounts geared to those interests, however, they preferred working and establishing relationships with a range of publics and media outlets. However, the practitioners welcomed concerns and questions about their minority group and facilitated relationships between their organizations or clients and their communities. This echoes previous research on minority practitioners in public relations (e.g., Mallette, 1995; Tillery-Larkin, 1999; Pompper, 2004).

Everyday racism. A number of African American and Hispanic women experienced the double bind of gender and race, meeting subtle discriminatory practices from individuals in the workplace. These workplace interactions tended to be more intricate, understated, and less visible than blatant racist remarks like the one this practitioner encountered in her job out of college. She was helping to put together a client’s hunting and fishing catalog.

We were brainstorming about, I think, the catalog, putting together the catalog, and one of the models was an African American male. The model agency we had sent over several snapshots, head shots, because we asked for certain body types because for hunting they wanted bulkier

frames as opposed to the lean, thin prints that you see for fashion. And so those bulkier frames they're African American men or Hispanic men sometimes because we eat real food. We don't just lick lettuce for lunch. Anyway, the client said, "I don't want any colored people in my catalog." Point blank right there. So I'm sitting there and at that moment I thought if I don't say anything – at first I thought that my bosses would say anything and they didn't, they didn't say a word, but there was such obvious silence, and I felt like if I don't say anything at this moment, they'll feel like it's okay and the next thing you know they'll be calling me a nigger. (African American heterosexual female, age 32, manager, corporate)

A small number of practitioners did have these blatantly racist and discriminatory encounters at work. When faced with these, practitioners reacted by confronting the source:

One of my coworkers thought it was hilarious that he saw a black man eating a big piece of watermelon in the cafeteria. I had to get up and close the door and say, 'I'm so glad that you said that just to me because anyone else in this office would have tried to fight you. You should know that that's not an appropriate joke for you to say in this office. You are the minority. You should recognize that and respect it because you will be challenged.' (Black heterosexual female, age 26, communications director, politics and government)

A few practitioners of color had their authority challenged by subordinates and equals. Appointed into a top public information officer position, one practitioner had the responsibility of coordinating relationships between the public works and safety departments. Her main contacts were two White female public information officers who did not welcome or respond to her position or responsibility or acquiesce to the power of her authority.

So I worked with primarily the police and the fire department. Well, I was a civilian. That was my first strike, was being a civilian. My second strike was that I was an African American female. And so you know, we did this planning process and we would sit in these meetings and go through these plans and agree to things with the fire and the police department. And then they'd walk away. And it was like we never made an agreement. It was like they would change everything. So you know, I'm like, okay, now what's the balance that I strike between Sapphire and the professional who is the authority? I was the commander. And they were incredibly obstinate. (African American female heterosexual, age 52, principal, agency/consultancy)

Practitioners frequently encountered social and work incidents structured by racialized gendered stereotypes and perceptions. The most common one was based on the Sapphire stereotype of Black women with much attitude. According to Bell and Nkomo (2001), "A Sapphire is described as being aloof, rude, self-centered, and lazy" (p. 246). Hostile, rude, outspoken, hypersensitive about race, and an ability to make quick and sassy remarks are pinned to the women who receive the Sapphire

designations. For example, African American women who interacted with White women in a candid and direct manner were accused of being abrasive, forceful, and domineering. One participant, a senior account manager with a large public relations firm, breached the firm's laid-back atmosphere by addressing an issue of concerns directly and her colleagues directly and was taken to task by her supervisor for creating a "threatening environment." An issue had snowballed from a comment, perceived as threatening and aggressive to one person and was communicated to others in the organization before reaching this African American senior account manager again:

So I had to take the weekend to calm down and then I had to go back to each individual to clarify the situation, going all the way back up to the final person I had spoken to, which was my boss, to say, "I was not aggressive in any way. I don't know how this snowballed, not really a huge issue. We're working on it and don't really like this label." It's not fair, it's not correct, and I'm not interested in having it continue. (Black heterosexual female, age 33, account manager, public relations agency)

Homophobia. At one point in time in their careers, the LGB participants experienced homophobic behaviors from colleagues and clients. For the majority of practitioners, heterosexism was subtle, understated, and invisible. Supervisors and senior managers practiced "supportive discouragement," (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995) or disguised his or her homophobia as a concern for the practitioner's career. Consider this exchange between one gay professional with his female, heterosexual supervisor:

She did sit me down one day and said, "I know what the reality is and I don't want to discuss it, but I have to tell you your lifestyle it is

discussed and we're not going to ask you to put that away, but as your friend and as a mentor, I can tell you that if you're "too out", you won't go anywhere in this company. It just makes too many people nervous." And while I thanked her for being able to say that to me, I also told her I'm not going to be able to make any promises because I'm not going to stop being who I am. ... So while being gay in the workplace is maybe a newer issue, what you're asking ultimately is for me to be dishonest about who I am. And I appreciated her frankness and I knew that it probably did change the future for me there, but I do think the education was a two-way street. (White gay male, age 40, writer/editor/public relations consultant)

For this supervisor, being "too gay" was the display of symbols and pictures that reminded others of your non-heterosexual status. That would include pictures of other men of your desk "unless it's your father or you and your soccer team. When people ask you what you do on the weekend, don't mention you had a date with somebody who's another guy. Just gloss over that."

In developing campaigns for LGBT audiences, several participants encountered resistance from their clients. The perceptions and stereotypes of lesbians, gay males, and bisexual individuals and the norms of heteronormativity shaped the interactions with practitioners and the direction and dimensions of the campaigns. As practitioners pitched ideas and developed campaigns, they sensed and perceived homophobia among the team. For instance, one practitioner who worked a campaign for sexual health recalled the

duality of the campaign resources and the attitudes toward heterosexual and gay couples.

How to set the mood? I'm like, that sounds great. That's really sweet. I love it. It's great. What do you have for the gay people? Oh, okay, then you click on this other item, and it takes you to the gay page. And there's an icon for how to avoid syphilis, how to apply a condom, the most commonly sexually transmitted diseases, and they just went on and on and on. I didn't know what to say, because I was new to the account. You want them to like you. You want to say yes to everything your client says, and I really liked working with these people, too. I just kind of went, well, I don't know. I have to be really honest and just say that as a gay person I went there, I'd be really offended. They were like, why. (White gay male, age 37, president, agency/consultancy)

Lavender ceiling. Most of the lesbian participants discussed their career progression in terms of heterosexual men and women, comparing their careers to hypothetical and real straight men and women and often finding that they might have moved up the ladder farther if they were heterosexual and if they were male. One participant, for example, questioned her gender and sexuality:

Do I think I would be at a higher position in my career if I was male?
Yes, definitely. I also think lesbians are less scary than gay men, because women are less scary, especially sexually. Everybody thinks about sex when they think about gay men. That's all they think about, I guess

because that's all men think about. (White lesbian female, age 47, director of communications)

For one lesbian who had achieved a senior-level position at a public relations agency, socializing with her employees and supervisors was not a pleasant situation. She had the binds of being older than her younger employees and being gay, making her different on two fronts. With her superiors and colleagues, she was a woman, a lesbian, and did not have children. It was difficult trying to fit in because it was necessary in order to network but she felt that others were awkward around her.

I think it would be easier for me to be a straight woman 'cause I would fit in better. As far as social activities outside the office, people would feel more comfortable. You know, "Hey, let's you and me and your husband get together after work" or whatever. And I think it would have been easier if I were mainstream. It's certainly been more interesting for me to be a lesbian 'cause you do different reactions than the norm, so it's kind of a little more interesting dynamic. (Caucasian lesbian female, age 42, director, public relations agency)

Lesbians as a rarity in public relations. Although public relations is considered a feminized field boasting a high concentration of women, the number of out, self-declared lesbian women practicing public relations is small, according to the lesbians and gay men participating in this research. For the lesbians interviewed, trying to locate other self-identified and "out" lesbians in the field and attempting to network through mainstream public relations organizations and at work was virtually impossible. As one

participant put it, “I met one other lesbian...there's no lesbian contingency. When you look around, and it's apparently all straight women, it's not a field dominated or in any lesbians” (White lesbian female, age 42, director, agency).

Speaking about her experience in the business of creating LGBT-targeted communication and trying to locate other lesbians in public relations and marketing, one practitioner lamented that the focus of communication efforts was not the entire LGBT community but rather one specific segment:

And sometimes I get tired of gay men. They get all the attention. We say we target gay and lesbian consumers. We actually mostly are targeting gay men because they're the more visible and researched aspect of the gay and lesbian community and then of course if we're not looking at lesbians, you can only imagine that we're not looking really at communities of color within the gay and lesbian segment. (White lesbian female, age 54, director, agency/consultancy)

The general lack of awareness of the diversity within the field can be attributed to many individuals not associating lesbians with professional, white-collar careers. One participant questioned whether it had to do with stereotypes.

This is not a job for some reason that draws a lot of lesbians. Like in the corporate world, mainstream women or mainstream looking women are more accepted in PR. PR, you're expected to have a little style, a little flair, and um, be you know, well-groomed, well-heeled, and that is not your typical lesbian. (White lesbian female, age 42, director, agency/consultancy)

White lesbians in public relations have the twin barriers of gender and sexual orientation working against them in the workplace: the glass ceiling and the lavender ceiling. However, the majority of the women interviewed stated that they believed they did not face any discrimination or repercussions based on their sexual orientation. Rather, being female had been the hindrance. For two practitioners, being lesbian has been detrimental and problematic in the workplace. For example, one public information officer had a threatening and uncomfortable workplace because of her manager who made demeaning remarks about lesbians and gays to coworkers and to her supervisors.

Several White participants were aware of their invisible minority status and the benefits afforded them because of race and the ability to blend into the mainstream.

One White female stated this more directly than the others did:

If I walk into a room, I sort of look like them. There's a lot of females in public affairs. I'm White. I'm female. Public affairs tend to be predominantly White and female so I look like I'm going to blend right in, except I'm different. (White gay/lesbian female, age 47, director of communications, corporate)

This contradicts recent research, which found that race does not act as a buffer to workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. Ragins, Cornwell, and Miller (2003) concluded that "racism and sexism may not spillover into experiences of heterosexism in the workplace" because lesbians reported experiences of heterosexism on par with those of people of color and White men.

Tokenism. Some practitioners in the study were tasked or faced with being the symbolic representative in the department or organization. Incidents of tokenism occurred across cultures, jobs, and experiences. The majority of practitioners believed they were hired for their current and past positions because of the skills and talents that they could offer to the job and the organization; the issue of representing their group came up in particular instances when face-time with target audiences or clients of color deemed it necessary. One African American woman who worked with a volunteer organization recounted her experience of being the voice and face of the organization in one community of color during a crisis:

We had a situation where most of the [name of organization] volunteers that were coming through there were Midwestern and they were White and they were older and they were there and they were making decisions about what would be spent or what would be given to help the people to start their lives over again, and the dynamics of having a practically all-White staff, and in this particular case maybe about 80 percent of the people in [name of city] were black, right there you'd walk into one of the service centers and it has this dynamic of a kind of master/slave paradigm. Even if people were doing things fairly or whatever, it just appeared that way, and so I was sent down there to say hey, there's diversity with the [name of organization]. (African American heterosexual female, age 52, principal, agency/consultancy)

For other practitioners, the opportunity to be out in the community and participate with local partners was limited to interaction with the affinity groups

with which the practitioner had something in common. One practitioner shared her frustration with her director who did not allow her to visit the mainstream groups even though she brought up the ideas.

If I want to attend conferences or things, a lot of times she wants them to be geared, my executive director, towards my African American status.

If it's just something that I just want to do that is maybe more geared toward business, something with say the [City] Chamber of Commerce, then she'll send someone else. If there was maybe the African American Chamber of Commerce, then "Let's send [name] because she represents the symphony and she's also African American." At the [City] Chamber of Commerce, "Let's send maybe [participant's name] and someone else," or "This is a great opportunity; let's just send someone else.

[Participant's name], thanks for bringing this to our attention. No, you can't attend, but we're going to send someone in your place." (Black heterosexual female, age 24, media specialist, nonprofit)

The value of these practitioners was in their performance before their respective audiences. As tokens, they were granted special access to these groups because they had an affinity with these groups based on skin color, thus showing that the organization was sensitive to diversity. The organization allowed these practitioners access to these groups in order to demonstrate diversity, and the heightened visibility added credibility to the organization.

Difference as coolness. A persistent fixation with the African Americans and the gay males in the office of being the "cool one" or having the "cool factor" was

noted by some participants. However, the responses to the “cool factor” from the two groups were different.

Among the African American/Black practitioners, being tagged with the “cool factor” was an irksome and irritating factor.

There've been some instances where people will, not speak differently to you, but they'll be like, hey what's up or yo, what's up. And it's like, what's with the slang and the lingo? You're not going to talk to White girl Stephanie who's right next to me and be like, yo what's up. But yet you'll say yo, what's up to me. You what I mean, it's stuff like that. (African American/Black straight female, age 26, account executive, public relations agency)

For gay men excluding the Black/African American gay male and the Hispanic gay male, the cool or hip factor signified an awareness of cultural or social trends and a way to gain advantage and visibility. Among gay men, the “cool factor” was nurtured by presence of and stereotypes surrounding creative gay males in the public relations workplace. One practitioner perceived a halo effect for gay men working on accounts at least from the clients’ perspective:

I don't know how many agency people you're talking to. At least in my many years, most clients are okay and actually are glad to have the creative gay guy leading the account, provided he's on strategy and doing the work. Because they like the constant flow of ideas which is one of my strengths. 'Cause in a way, they see that's what they're paying for.”

(Caucasian American gay male, age 36, associate director of public relations, advertising agency).

According to the practitioner, the gay men working on the accounts were desired because of their vividness and their knack and ability to produce grand visions and ideas for the campaigns. Their creative talent and skill contributed to the clients' satisfaction and peace of mind, but also contributed to the agency's financial solvency.

Another dimension of the cool factor is the perception among several gay male practitioners that they were better able to discern cultural trends and fads than others and had a storehouse of knowledge regarding these matters. The ability to manipulate these stereotypes privileged these practitioners, allowing them to pivot within the function of the stereotype and use it to their advantage:

It opens opportunities to be engaged in discussions and planning whether it be for a client or brainstorming things or just kind of in general within the agency. Like people will tap us for what's hot, what's going on in the scene like the nightlife and restaurants and different things like that when they're taking clients to dinner or what recommendations, just kind of random things like that. (Caucasian German gay male, age 29, account supervisor, public relations agency)

The cool factor is based in identity signifiers, and for some practitioners, the observed signifiers are not relevant aspects that they choose to highlight in the everyday interactions with their work colleagues. For African American practitioners, many wanted to be known for their competence and skills, and they wanted the room to express their cultural identity. However, their cultural identity did not include slang and

hip-hop nuances. There was an inability for many African American practitioners to manipulate stereotypes because of the historical vantage point and perceptions of African American women and men. The cool factor played up by gay practitioners gives them an advantage in the workplace. However, this advantage is partly based in mainstream stereotypes and perceptions of how gay men should act and what should interest gay men.

Diversity-friendly policies. What contributed to perceptions of acceptance for many participants were when their organization had formal commitments to diversity as expressed through organizational diversity statements and domestic partner benefits. For example, the policies at his corporation made one White gay male feel more comfortable to be out and to work as a public relations practitioner:

My minority status happens to be invisible until I choose to disclose it. So, um, which I, of which I do. I found it much easier overall just to be and be out. And the company has policies to back me up on that. That makes a world of difference. (White gay male, age 47, manager of corporate communications)

A White female who self-identified as gay once worked in an environment where she did not feel comfortable disclosing her identity as a gay or lesbian worker for fear of losing her job or retaliation. Her current employer has a stated non-discrimination policy for lesbian and gay employees, and she felt a greater acceptance.

At the time, when I was at [name of previous employer], that was not in place. And I did not feel at all confident that if I was out, I felt very likely that, not likely, I felt it could impact my employment there. Military-established, it would have been a difficult situation in my view. So one of the things that appealed to me when I came to [name of current employer] is they even have stated non-discrimination policy for gays and lesbians. Now I will say, anything that I, most of what I felt has been my having come and – this has been the first organization that I've worked in that I felt open in, so I didn't feel totally comfortable at first just because I wasn't used to it. (White gay female, age 46, senior manager-media relations)

As practitioners looked for jobs, these elements, along with the ability to disclose their orientation and feel comfortable as who they are in the workplace, were paramount. For example, one practitioner turned down an offer from a headhunter because of the company's diversity policies and stance:

I had a situation where I had a head-hunter actually with the company that recruited me to come to Ford, so I have a really good relationship with them. They called me about a job working for Exxon Mobil, and Exxon Mobil is the only company in the Fortune 50 that does not offer same-sex domestic partner benefits....So I told them point blank, I would never work for Exxon Mobil. Oh, it's the environmental...No, it's not, and here's why. I do think I influenced them, because that job never appeared on their website. (White lesbian female, age 47, director of communications)

The push for employers to cover domestic partner benefits along with other benefits and to acknowledge the rights of LGB workers started with the formation of employee network groups. Many of the lesbian and gay corporate public relations practitioners who participated in this research were members or affiliated with these groups.

RQ2: How do minority public relations practitioners understand and make meaning of organizational power? What factors play a role in minority public relations practitioners' interpretation of power?

Power was seen as having access to knowledge; access and control of financial resources; holding a seat among the dominant coalition; and having a lofty position in the organization. Some practitioners melded the concepts of influence and power together, believing that influence was a necessary antecedent of power. Power was also critically considered by a few practitioners who viewed it as patriarchal and an entity shaped by Whiteness. Practitioners achieved power and empowerment in their organizational roles through various avenues. Being mentored and mentoring not only served as an outlet and a way to connect to other members in the organization, but it was also a way to exert one's power and influence in organizational networks.

Practitioners who were senior-level employees also achieved greater echelons of power, status, and empowerment in the organization through their ability to create and develop multicultural communication groups or work teams; these efforts allowed them the opportunity to transform their physical, operational space and their emotive space in the corporate structure into something that was welcoming and appreciative of diversity. This allowed them the opportunity to pick, develop, and groom teams, thus displaying

their management and leadership skills and talent. The interviewed practitioners built and maintained affective and professional relationships and networks that helped to sustain them as they navigated through organizational life. Practitioners of color relied upon the practice of overcompensation in order to overcome any professional threats or challenges to their personal power or their role in the organization. The subthemes within this research question are definitions of power, definitions of empowerment, the dominant coalition and power, and acceptance of the status quo. Practitioners held multiple views of organizational power, and several factors influenced how practitioners viewed power. Although practitioners viewed through various perspectives, the majority of their perspectives fit tightly within the frames and conceptions of power and empowerment as defined by the predominant, mainstream managerial perspectives and the mainstream view of public relations—the Excellence Theory.

Definitions of power. The framing and conception of organizational power differed between practitioners based upon their location and status within their institutional hierarchy and their experiences with past and present organizations.

For many practitioners, descriptions of power came from personal experiences with the control of and access to information. Practitioners acknowledged the importance of knowledge because of their strategic boundary-spanning role. In this capacity, practitioners positioned themselves in the communities surrounding the organization, integrating themselves in order to gather information. The opinions and insights of the community were taken into the organization to support or alter the organizational position on issues and to provide management with an understanding of

the public's sentiment on problems and concerns. One practitioner who described his role as a strategic counselor described his method of information handling in the organization as forming fragments of knowledge into a relatable, easier-to-understand information capsule:

I'm in meetings with peers and people who are few levels below me who are communicators, and sometimes I will bring up something that seems sort of random but then when I explained it a little, here's how I see this tying to that, it's that kind of you know being able to connect things and a lot of good PR folks have a talent for connecting the dots and making sort of synthesis between sort of unrelated things. I think that's something I've always been pretty good at, and I think it's something I've gotten better at as I've become more aware of my ability to do that.

(White gay male, age 47, manager of corporate communications, corporate)

In the context of power and influence in the organization, the uses of information by practitioners in this manner—purposes such as information sharing, intelligence gathering, and boundary spanning—were done in an effort to bolster the department's standing and to heighten the credibility of the public relations practitioner and department.

Others also viewed power as information; however, these practitioners saw the power-information dynamic displayed in a negative capacity. Information was used strategically as a bargaining chip in the political game between and within departments. There was a struggle between supervisors and employees or a shuffle between

departments regarding the exchange of information pertinent to the required tasks. This use of information and power had a pessimistic and off-putting impact on these practitioners. Frequently, participants cited being held hostage because of certain behaviors, including the intentional withholding and hiding of information. For example:

When you get into situations where there's a misuse of power, it's where you see people withhold knowledge, keep it all to themselves because to them, knowledge is power, that sort of thing. With a more open organization, an individual, that power so to speak is being shared throughout, not being abused. The higher you get up in the hierarchy, you have that decision of how you are going to use it. (U.S. White gay female, age 46, senior manager-media relations, corporate)

As viewed by the participants, the use and misuse of power for departmental or personal power can be self-serving, corrupting, and destructive. However, workplace politics—the use of power and coalitions in organizations to overcome obstacles and realize certain ends—can help individuals accomplish their goals (Spicer, 1998).

According to Spicer, “Given the nature of the public relations function (a communication function of management that seeks to align the organization with various stakeholders), public relations practitioners may often find themselves in situations demanding the use of influence, that is, situations that are political in nature” (p. 132). Organizational politics typically arise in the public relations function when there is uncertainty, when there is the potential for conflict, and when practitioners are in the upper levels of management. As the gatekeepers and boundary spanners for the

organization, practitioners are in charge of the organizational environmental scanning efforts, assessing the ambiguities in the environment and attempting to reduce and manage the turmoil in the surroundings (Spicer, 1998; L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2005). Also, practitioners negotiate conflict for their clients and organizations in order to keep the stakeholders in a state of co-existence with the organization. Third, public relations practitioners are integrated into the upper echelon of management. For those interacting within the management structure, they will experience organizational politics and begin to accumulate power and negotiate with others. For example, in Serini's (1993) study of public relations practitioners, the use of negotiation was expressly important to accomplish public relations tasks and responsibilities. Negotiation was a component of the power set used in the dominant coalition: "At its essence, power is used here to refer to the ability to evoke change and to resist forced change through negotiation" (p. 4).

Raven and French (1959) considered the ability to determine financial resources of a firm as a source of power, and among the participants, having fiscal resources at your disposal was another commonly mentioned view of power. Practitioners perceived discretionary power to create and maintain budgets as one source of power within organizations and public relations departments. A female practitioner who left a management position in city government found herself in a situation where she had limited decision-making authority and budgetary jurisdiction in her new organization. Her frustration with her lack of capabilities and the absence to control, proceed, and act in the best interest of her organization was evident in our conversation.

Here I have no power. Or, I have no means of support to do anything.

We are celebrating the 100th anniversary of [name of corporation], and you would think that that was a big deal. But we were told to go out and create events on a grassroots level with no budget, no money, nothing.

Now here we are, a billion dollar corporation, a billion dollar corporation, and we have no budget....So that means we have to beg, borrow, scrape and rely on our contacts to be in this – to survive.

(African American heterosexual female, age 43, public relations specialist, corporate)

An African American practitioner working in higher education public affairs switched jobs because there was an immediate need to be financially solvent. Also, the significance she attached to money and power was the ability to eliminate and cut public relations positions or tactics, which had personal meaning for her.

I equated power with who holds the purse strings, who has the money 'cause I haven't – I don't know, I have had to chase the dollar, going from one job to another. I guess that's, I guess because of my financial standing it's just been, just kind of has shaped my perception. If I had power, usually means if I had the money, I could get this done, I could get that done. Because without the budget sometimes they just decide that newsletters can be cut and whole PR departments can get cut. I really equated that power with money. (African American heterosexual female, age 48, public information officer, higher education)

These practitioners explained that those who can increase the organization's bottom line through penny-pinching or those who withhold financial decision-making powers from others in the department have some semblance of power and influence. For those who perceive power in this manner, the ability to control the access to money limited the functionality and efficiency of practitioners and the department. In terms of remuneration and salary disparities, the salary gap between managers and technicians, men and women, and people of color and Whites remains, and the earnings of individuals may contribute to their perceptions of power. Salary and departmental control of financial resources ties into rank and position; where you are located in the organization's chain of leadership or the dominant coalition; and your ability to access those in positions of power was another conception of power espoused by the practitioners.

Several practitioners conceived of power as being within the dominant coalition. According to one practitioner, she fought for her access to the dominant coalition, inserting herself into key meetings with her legislator and the senior-level staff and, if she wasn't able to make or be in the meeting, by asking pointed questions. Her past experience of working for her hometown's district attorney who did not consult with her on a major incident involving a celebrity taught her an important lesson. Instead of asking for her input, he wanted to go public with an announcement that he was charging the entertainer with a felony on the same day he was hosting a major event in the city.

He could say, Don't come back because [name of city] is racist, even though you're black. I don't think that would happen. I don't want—He

didn't want the police to preempt him and say that he was being soft. And I said, it's just not worth that. Just call the police chief and tell him you're going to charge him. But you're going to do it Monday not Friday. It's just three days, it's not going to make that big of difference. He disagreed, blah blah blah. Ten minutes later, he came to my desk. So I talked to the police chief. He understands we're going to wait. We're going to announce it on Monday. I was like, however, you want to handle. I feel much more comfortable giving my two cents and however you want to take it, you take it that way. I'm not doing my job if I don't tell you. But that's the result of being at the executive level. You have to be there in order to advise. (Black heterosexual female, age 26, director of communications, government/public works)

The importance of the practitioner's access to the dominant coalition is related in this practitioner's experience and credibility. In order for the practitioner's advice to be respected, and in order for the practitioner to not be excluded, the practitioner must have organizational expertise and be savvy about organizational politics (Pfeffer, 1992; L. A. Grunig et al., 2002). The practitioner must have the status, education, and experience that facilitates his or her entry into the organization's dominant coalition and makes him or her "likely to be counted among an organization's decision makers" (Berger & Reber, 2006, p. 201).

Other practitioners conceived of power as the role one occupied in the organization and the access granted through that position. According to one practitioner

in the organization, power was directly linked to the role one occupied in the managerial hierarchy:

Forgive me for sounding cynical. In corporations, it's what your rank is.

It's what your salary is. My second answer would be influence, and influence is great. But I've know people at very, very low levels that have influence. But really what matters in a company is what your salary is, what your grade or rank is, the size of your office and the benefits that go with it. (White gay/lesbian female, age 47, director of communications, corporate)

Other practitioners repeated similar statements about power, position, and rank.

For these practitioners, power in the workplace was equated with the prominence and level achieved within the organization. An accumulation of greater prestige and power accompanies a rise within the organization. As one practitioner simply stated, "As you achieve higher levels of job status or position, you have more power." (African American/Black straight female, age 26, account executive, agency)

Many practitioners used the word influence as a synonym for power, stating that they could not find a better or proper word to express how power worked in organizations. A few embedded influence in their descriptions of power unintentionally. Regardless of how the term was used, influence and power were intertwined in a number of practitioners' understandings and interpretations of power. Influence was seen as the way that an individual had the ability to change people's thinking and actions.

Usually when I hear the word power being bandied about I think people are thinking of that somehow the people who have it can simply by their say so, you know, affect the things that you and I do. And I think it's a lot more subtle than that. It's more like people will give more weight to what they say, because they think they are somehow more deserving of being paid attention to. Power isn't fixed and immutable. It's fluid. And the powerless have some too. They just often don't realize what sort of powers they do have. (Black gay male, age 47, writer/reporter, higher education)

Influence was often used a substitute for power. In scholarship and theory, the terms have common intersections. Power is commonly expressed as the capacity to get things; the ability to get others to do what you want them to do (Berger & Reber, 2006; Barbalet, 1985; L. A. Grunig, 1992; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992). Power is “the expression of capacity to initiate...social power is the generative force through which social relations and institutions are directions” (Barbalet, 1985, p. 538). However, influence is the exercise and the realization of that social power (Mintzberg, 1983; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977; Berger & Reber, 2006). Influence is the actual process and use of power to accomplish duties and for purposive action. The sources of influence are the same as those multiple bases for power (French & Raven, 1959, 1960; Berger, 2005; Mintzberg, 1983; Kanter, 1977), and just as power can be used as a gatekeeping function, influence is used to control information, resources, access, and actions (Berger & Reber, 2006). Small distinctions exist between power and influence, yet scholars note that the two terms are used interchangeably (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977; Mintzberg, 1983).

A few practitioners linked power to masculinity and Whiteness. Whiteness and masculinity were posited by male and female practitioners of color and White lesbian practitioners as dominant because of the people who filled the senior ranks of management in firms and organizations—White men—and how power filtered through society.

The way power has been traditionally distributed in U.S. culture and most international cultures today is based on a hierarchy that's dominated by White males. Maybe even patriarchy; it would be a better word. (European American bisexual, age 56, principal, consulting)

Practitioners' past and current experiences in organizations and the demonstrated reproduction of White male privilege shaped their views of power.

...Because realistically it's still very much a man's world. And we can say well, you know, isn't it great. PR is so welcoming to women. Eighty percent of the field is women. Yadda, yadda, yah. But the people with the power are still men. And no matter how you slice it, that's the way it is. And the same thing is true when we discuss in demographics in this country and the fact that before 2050, Whites will be the minority. Well, who do you think is going to have the power before 2050 in the culture? My money says it will still be Whites, and it will still be men, because they control the wealth now. (Caucasian lesbian female, age 51, associate professor, higher education)

The association of power with heterosexual male privilege or White male privilege is a critical view of how practitioners understand their position in society and “how we

think of and live in our bodies” (Halewood, 1997, p. 512). The simultaneous everyday experience of identity determines how people perceive and acknowledge the parameters surrounding them and the substantial advantages available to others. McIntosh (1997) called these oblivious privileges granted to those in the dominant culture “an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compasses, emergency gear, and blank checks” (p. 291). Beyond the individual level of experience or ability to maneuver in society, there lies the set institutional racial, gendered, and heterocentric practices—a vast terrain of what Flagg (1997) considered “usually unsituated assumptions that [one] culture is superior to all others” (p. 630).

For some participants, power was conceived to be a personal entity separate from the managerial, organizational function. Several practitioners commented on the facet of individual influence that dwelled within themselves, a source of ability and strength within their spirit that served to motivate and inspire. This power was based in the knowledge of self and self-identity.

I am the boss. So I know I'm queer. When I have worked for companies or organizations as an employee, they might not accept me as I am.

...Am I going to let the boss know I'm queer? Am I going to let the company know that I'm queer? In this case, I don't have to say anything.

The boss knows I'm queer 'cause I am the boss. (European American lesbian and queer, age 52, president/founder, agency)

During the “power” word association, one firm owner mentioned the word “dyke” in jest and answered in response:

I meant me. [laughter] I mean powerful lesbians who are owning who they are, I just think that there's such power in knowing yourself.

Authenticity, man—that's it, to be authentic everyday, all the time.

That's not who you are. If you don't know who you are, that's where the trouble is. (White/Caucasian lesbian female, age 54, director, agency)

Definitions of empowerment. Tied to the concept of power is the idea of empowerment. Popular among a great number of the participants was the perception of power being a negative entity, yet empowerment was perceived in a more positive light. The widely held and expressed belief was that empowerment meant shared accountability and responsibility to the employees in the lower ranks and layers of the system. According to one participant, it is the flexible bond of trust between the employee and management that enables work to get done, allowing the employees the means and ability to do that work:

...I'm able to make decisions about staffing, how we get the work done, who's engaged in the work, when they're engaged, and I don't have to vet that constantly through the senior management to get the work done, that there's a sense of trust that [name of participant] understand our business model, she understands our financials, she understands our client's service model, and we can trust that she's going to make the right decisions to get it done, to benefit the client and to benefit [name of agency]. (Black heterosexual female, age 33, account manager, public relations agency)

Practitioners achieved this trust through having reliable, competent practices, by following through on promises, and by delivering a stream of consistent, creative work. Or, as the practitioner quoted above, surmised, trust and confidence were gained because practitioners understand that one does not put his or her “managers in situations where they got blindsided or more surprised by something or just in a bad situation internally or externally.”

Another participant who serves a managing partner in a public relations firm he owns expressed the belief that empowerment worked to enable those within the lower levels of the organization: “I don't want to be involved in each and every decision on the account. I want to be informed, but I want them to be able make their own decisions. And that's part of the learning process. Part of the way you learn how to service an account is that you learn how not to service an account. You learn through experience.”

Dominant coalition and power. According to the Excellence Theory, the public relations practitioners’ connection to and membership in the dominant coalition demonstrated their credibility, their connection to the senior leadership in the organization and the esteem in which the management held their work, their skills, and the public relations department. Some of the practitioners in this research worked outside of the dominant coalition and were not privy to access and consultation with this group. Many practitioners, because of their status as contracted agencies and their formal title, had greater reception and latitude with the group. However, almost all practitioners acknowledged that the dominant coalition was a shifting and flexible

alliance with different capabilities and experiences to each coalition. An example of this situation was expressed by a practitioner in the following quotation:

And I think because we have a small office, like it's not uncommon to be directly engaged on a day-to-day basis with senior managers. Um, whether you could be in client meetings, whether you're doing brainstorming, whether they're doing strategic planning – when I was in [name of city where agency office is located], my supervisor was the VP, was very good about pulling me into things, whether it's talking about client needs or client happenings or whether it was a crisis or whether it's hey, what do you think about this. Because we are a small office and we only have like 30 professionals between the two offices, you can't help but engage with your senior managers. They're very much integrated into the everyday client business which I don't think is something that necessarily happens in say a larger organization per se. (African American/Black straight female, age 26, account executive, public relations agency)

Most practitioners were located in middle management, having some or great input into the decision-making of the department. These practitioners did have contact with the coalition and a tighter working relationship with the leadership in their direct department and the overall organization.

Several practitioners considered themselves outside of the circle of power, and this was by choice and by circumstance. For example, one practitioner who was head of a university public relations department did not want to be considered powerful.

Another practitioner who sat outside of the dominant coalition did not have any power in her role, yet her work in media relations was respected in the organization.

Acceptance of status quo. Depending on the participants' situated identity in the organization, most participants tolerated or embraced the status quo. In cases where the status quo was tolerated or actively embraced, Whiteness and maleness were the central identities. Regardless of the other identities operating, these were at the forefront.

White male privilege was identified and highlighted by a significant number of White gay male participants. The connection and operation between their gender, classed, and raced identities was noted by the White gay male participants. This was always in contrast to their invisible minority status as gay men. They were different from the mainstream, but the ease of being White men in society was documented and commented upon as something that gave them a familiarity or comfort with everyone else in the organization's power structure and the access, reception, and ability to do and move in and around organizations. Some expressed minor discomfort and hesitancy with their privilege:

In most cases, people do not bring it up in most business situations, so.

And I think being White and male in our culture, there is a White male privilege. Sort of an entrée into a lot of things here. So I'm not saying I'm leveraging that. It's just kind of the way it is. So I really have not experienced a downside to it that I'm aware of. My career seems to be going well. (White American gay male, age 47, manager of corporate communications, corporate)

Others were more unabashed in the acknowledgement of that privilege and the role that they have in the functioning within that mechanism. One practitioner cast the fault for the privilege on society and took advantage of it in the business setting:

Well, White male is great, because the truth of the matter is, like it or not, America is run by old White men, and I'm an old White man. So that part of me slips right in, unnoticed. It's very comfortable, because that's just kind of the way of the world, and I'm on the right side of that particular fence. Without arguing that, that's good, bad, or indifferent, that's just the way it goes. So when I'm on the face of it, I'm very straight acting, and I'm a very middle-aged looking guy, and well dressed, and all that stuff, and I've got good business manners, and social manners, so I fit right in. (Anglo Swiss-German exclusively gay male, age 50, president, consultancy)

Flagg (1997) noted that many in the dominant culture operate in a veil of transparency, not thinking about their identities or behaviors, experiences, norms, or perspectives that are identity-specific. Regarding race, Flagg wrote that "transparency often is the mechanism through which white [sic] decision makers who disavow white supremacy impose white norms on blacks [sic]" (p. 629). For Caucasian males of any sexual orientation, Whiteness carries no racial burdens or responsibilities. Instead it grants one certain distinguishing features in business society. As Flagg noted, "Whiteness attains opacity, becomes apparent to the white [sic] mind only in relation to, and in contrast with, the "color" of nonwhite"

(p. 629). However, for gay practitioners, there is the ability to see themselves as outsiders within (P. H. Collins, 2000), as belonging and being shunned because they possess a stigmatized identity that is not welcomed in many circles of organizations dominated by heterocentric values and headed by heterosexual White males. Although their race or color may allow them to fit into the dominant power structure of organizations, their sexual orientation is the unprivileged identity and can cause friction between and with others in and outside the organization. These practitioners do cast themselves in both identities and are able to see their places and positions and share the ability to acknowledge the structural barriers and privileges accounted and disavowed to them because of race, gender, and sexual orientation.

RQ3: How do minority public relations practitioners negotiate and/or challenge any perceived constraints resulting from organizational power?

The participants negotiated or challenged the constraints they perceived as outcomes of their identities and lack of power in their organizations. Their methods of resistance and challenge took shape in a variety of ways: mentoring, reaching out for more diversity, dominant coalition membership, social support and networking, overcompensation, disclosure, making minor adjustments for the mainstream, humor, and separating work and home spheres.

Mentoring. Within the day-to-day organizational lives and experiences of practitioners and the stories practitioners told to express their daily circumstances and encounters, power or empowerment was not mentioned by name. However,

practitioners used various avenues of power and empowerment in a multitude of ways to achieve particular outcomes to benefit their careers and to help others along the way.

For all practitioners, mentoring was a source of empowerment and gave them a sense of mindfulness and consciousness. These activities were ways to stay rooted in the community and act in a professional role. For African American professionals, the aspects of mentoring and community involvement were tied to the ideas of civic uplift, watching out for your brother or sister, and spirituality. In the case of one practitioner, the seamless application and incorporation of faith into her professional life has inspired her to work with her colleagues and others in the field to develop their talent and potential. “I think part of it is my upbringing and part of it is my faith. I believe that you can’t enjoy alone. I honestly believe to whom much has been given, much is expected. I don’t make a conscious decision on that. I just think that that’s what I, what everybody’s supposed to do, and it comes very naturally to me” (Black heterosexual female, age 43, executive vice president, public relations agency). This was not the case for all racioethnic groups. According to one Hispanic practitioner, community involvement, which included volunteering time to public relations groups and mentoring, was atypical within their community. This Cuban American practitioner recalled her mother looking at her working on various committees and volunteering on various groups. “My mother would look at me and ask why are you doing it? What does it mean to you financially? If you are struggling, money is what is important, giving your time away is incongruous” (White American Hispanic heterosexual female, president, consultancy).

Several professionals of color and LGB professionals mentioned that they served as mentors to employees with fewer years of experience and to those under their command. One Black female agency practitioner made it a point to introduce herself to the new interns of color at her organization, take them to lunch, and take time out for informational interviews and multicultural internship and recruitment fairs. An agency vice president acted as a connector for her protégés, finding routes and inroads for them to relate to and link up with the superiors and influencers in the organization. She provided an illustration:

The other day I was coming back from New York with the guy who heads our office with whom I have a very lively relationship and I said, “There’s a group of young people that I really want you to meet. I know you know them, but I want you to know them well. And I think they’re very promising and I want them on your screen.” He said, “Who is it? I’ll meet with them.” So I gave him the names. He looked at it. He said, “Are there any White people on your list?” [laughter] I had to laugh. I said no. I said, “Cause you know they know how to work it.” I said, “I’m working with those that don’t. The White girls know how to get to you. And the White boys know how to get to you.” I said, “No, I’m working with those who are naturally not going to sort of operate like that.” (Black heterosexual female, age 43, executive vice president, public relations agency)

These practitioners used their organizational insight to help newer employees establish their footing and employed their administrative power as a springboard for their

protégés to meet and network with senior managers and other influential decision makers in the field and the organization.

Although some of the practitioners were actively mentoring and had mentors inside and outside their organizations, few did not have the mentor-protégé relationship for themselves. These practitioners acknowledged the importance of mentoring and lamented the guidance and support a mentor could have had on their career:

I really wish I had that mentor who I could ask, “How do I deal with this immature vice president?” I would feel more empowered, have an ally. Or if there were more female directors of my age, I didn't kinda feel like the only one blowing the breeze by myself. Strength in numbers, I feel like there were more of us, the more people that fit my experience level, age, and I'm sure if she were lesbian that would be great. (Caucasian lesbian female, age 42, director, public relations agency)

When one public relations counselor lost an account, she did not have the professional support or guidance that a mentor could offer. She recognized the benefits of a mentor as she was going through that situation and realized how unprepared and isolated she was.

I was so ill equipped for it, Natalie, because it quite frankly had not happened to me very often—it has not certainly happened to me on that level. And I felt very alone. I didn't have anyone, I didn't feel that that I had any person, any professional woman or man that I could call and say, “This just happened, and I don't need consultation from a personal perspective. I can get that from my mother or my husband. But I need

consultation and counsel on what do I, how do I deal with this public failure, how I do conduct myself, how do I pickup, how do I get my spirit back.” And I didn’t have anyone besides my family and I found myself grasping for straws within my organization and throughout my career of anyone that I could call. (Black heterosexual female, age 43, executive vice president, public relations agency)

She found solace in a family friend who was a senior executive in a related field, but this practitioner does not consider herself as having a mentor yet.

Reaching out for more diversity. Several high-level practitioners had been asked to lead or develop specialized communication outreach efforts for particular publics or audiences. The move to develop African American, Hispanic, multicultural, and/or LGBT-specific targeted public relations or marketing communication groups originated from different locations within the various organizations, but all the practitioners who headed these practices saw leading these groups as a leap in status and influence and as methods to gain some power and empowerment. According to one practitioner who headed an LGBT-targeted communication effort, other practitioners generated the idea, but he decided to take the lead on the agency’s communication group for the betterment of his career.

I see it as an opportunity for me to develop my leadership skills and demonstrate my capabilities on a broader scale than just in this office. I see it as an opportunity to demonstrate that a good idea can really take you places. Not that it was really my idea to have this practice, it wasn't. I wish it had been, but it wasn't. But I certainly played a big role in taking the

idea and making it happen. I've certainly seen the benefits of that, in terms of lots of opportunities to work on some interesting activities. (White gay male, age 38, senior vice president, public relations firm)

For a Black heterosexual female working at a global agency, developing a multicultural practice was a career move sparked by a professional “debacle” that has given her greater access and exposure within the company network and the opportunity to create more professionals of color in the field:

And so for me, it has given me the power base and the independence and the autonomy that I wanted. It has given me an opportunity to create something and even before I was doing this, I liked my space. I liked the space in which I operated and I like, and it's important to me that there are more of me. . . . I have a woman that works for me now, and she's amazing. And part of her evaluation is to find more people like her to bring them here and grow and develop them. And she is doing an amazing block of work. And I look at her and it almost brings me to tears because I see me. And I need to see more of me within the organization. I need to see more me on the street. I need to see more, more me in our industry. And this sounds so, oh it's all about me and it's good kind of thing. But I really do think that, I hope that people enjoy their space as I describe it as much I enjoy mine. I like my organization. I like my place in the organization. I like my stature in the organization. I like my autonomy. (Black heterosexual female, age 43, executive vice president, public relations agency)

Dominant coalition membership. The public relations practitioner's membership and connection to the dominant coalition demonstrated their connections to the senior leadership in the organization and the esteem in which the management holds their skills and the public relations department's technical and managerial competencies.

Practitioners acknowledged that the dominant coalitions within the organization were shifting and flexible alliances with different allegiances. Therefore, they had to demonstrate different capabilities and expectations for each. Most practitioners were located in middle management, having some or great input into the decision-making of the department. These practitioners did have a tightly coupled, working relationship with their supervisors and more loosely coupled working relationships with the higher management.

Several practitioners considered themselves outside of the circle of power, and this was partly by choice and by circumstance. Several practitioners who viewed power as a power over entity did not seek power for themselves, did not try to acquire management positions, or did not attempt to secure access for public relations within the decision-making structure of their organization. They preferred to be left alone to create, write, and do the tasks their department was assigned and challenged to do. For example, one participant who was the head of her university's public affairs department did not want to be considered powerful. Rather, her goal was to establish and maintain a successful media relations department for college. To her, her role and responsibility were "to support the mission of the college and to give attention to enough of, a broad, the whole gamut of schools. We have four different schools. To try to balance

coverage, so that nobody feels left out.” (White Jewish lesbian female, age 51, director of communication, higher education)

Two practitioners who were outside of the dominant coalition did not have any power in their departments, contributing to the decision-making for the department. Yet their tactical work, especially in media relations, was respected in the organization.

According to one:

I have complete autonomy as to how an event should be scheduled, or how I should promote my areas. Of course, you work with the developing officers in each area. You work with people in each area. But as far as media, the decisions are mine. It's sort of like I have a mini-PR [office], even though I'm within a larger office, but my area is mine. And I handle it as I want it, always conferring with each institute, each school and their needs and listening to what they have to say. But coming to decisions of okay, this is where I think we should place more emphasis, or here are the publications or media outlets that we should stress in this particular instance, here are the kind of stories that I see should be highlighted, that type of thing. (Black Cuban American heterosexual female, age 52, higher education)

Social support and networking. For practitioners of color who had other professionals of color in their work group or within the organization, finding and building community at work were essential tactics. Almost all the African American/Black practitioners interviewed who worked in a corporate or agency setting sought out other African American/Black employees or other employees of color in

their agencies and corporations for comfort, support, guidance, and friendships to get through the workday and to understand events that transpired in the workplace. One executive pulled together a group of African American practitioners regularly for affinity and encouragement:

But I think in all organizations that I've been in there's always a tendency of the Black people to coalesce together socially and to go to each other for support and after a meeting, "Can you believe that shit?" kind of thing, that type of thing which I just love and I find so rich and so vibrant and so supportive. And I think you need that in any organization. In any organization, you have like that little support system. (Black heterosexual female, age 43, executive vice president, public relations agency)

Formal groups such as employee network groups and public relations associations also created network opportunities and provided opportunities for practitioners with other professionals socially and professionally at work and outside of work. Three participants discussed at length their participation in their corporations' employee LGBT network group. Outside of formal network groups were networks of practitioners that provided a social and professional outlet for practitioners. An informal gathering of lesbian and gay male practitioners helped one practitioner as he transitioned in his career:

I would say that as I became more out in my sexuality and I met others, particularly in [large metropolitan city], like me, who were gay males and lesbians, particularly professionally, I think we bonded together. ... I don't think it directly helps me in my career, gotten me more money, or

anything like that, but as I'm sitting here now trying to decide what I want to do next in my life, this has been a great support group for me, a group of people with whom I can be very frank and open and laugh and have a good time and be obnoxious, but also I know that if I needed freelance work here or there or if I needed somebody to help me on a project, it would be the first group of people I might go to. (European American White gay male, age 38, vice president for marketing and communications, nonprofit)

The creator of this group, a former public relations executive and current freelance writer and editor, decided that the mainstream public relations organizations were not doing enough for the lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and transgendered community and decided to start a networking group of his own:

The only thing I would say traditionally is that I think our primary professional organization, PRSA, has come late to the gay issue, especially as many gay and lesbian public relations professionals as there are. I'm not sure if you're familiar, but they are just now setting up the gay and lesbian special interest groups. . . . That's shameful in a way. I mean for one thing this informal group that I started, I started five years ago and I was five years too late. So I'm a little ashamed of my professional organization that they started late, but better late than never. (White Caucasian gay male, age 40, writer/editor/public relations consultant, consultancy)

Overcompensation. Almost all of the participants of color explained the need to work and push themselves harder to excel and climb the corporate ladder. An African American heterosexual male who owned his own communication firm said, “You're always having to just prove yourself. And you're always in the position of having to run faster than your competition, than your White counterparts” (African American heterosexual male, age 37, managing partner, public relations firm). According to one African American account supervisor at a large agency, “It could be perception, it could be reality, but you know from the day that we're born, we're always taught you know you're gonna have to work, you have to work ten times hard and blah blah blah. And so you just kind of, you just kind of do. You know, you don't want to be judged as not capable of being able to do the work” (African American straight female, age 28, account supervisor, public relations agency). Some reiterated the adage that people of color needed to work several times harder and longer than Whites to get ahead in the workplace and that there were different measures for accountability and performance for “us” and for “them”:

To me, I felt that my other job, it was a public relations job, I don't know if it's self-induced pressure or whatnot. I almost feel kinda cliché saying it, but it's almost like I feel like I have to work twice as hard. And it's not, and that could be just my own, pressures that I put on myself or whatnot. But I feel like certain people can get away with certain things that I couldn't get away with. . . . You know, the girl down the hall can be a little ditzy and forget to do something, whereas if I forget to do something, it's

like, “Well, what happened?” (African American/Black female straight female, age 26, account executive, public relations agency)

However, two practitioners viewed this strategy of overcompensation as somewhat dated and not representative of all work settings. For the Black female account supervisor quoted earlier, the balance between her job and home life was important and necessary to her, and she realized that she didn’t have to work harder all the time, only smarter. One thing she appreciated about her current post was the evenness in the work environment and the erosion of that need to push so hard and so much: “We have that type of environment where you have a clear work-life balance and so anyway, that once you're able to prioritize what's important to you, you're able to really prioritize other things in life—your client work, your projects and activities.” A Mexican-American male who sits as the vice-president of publicity for a firm echoed the same sentiment. On his first day with his current company,

...within the first hour, I basically said well, just give me my desk, I’m ready to go, you know what I mean, instead of just like a lot of people would lounge around for the first day and greet and meet and everything. And I did, I did the cordials, but I was ready to go. Show me a desk and I’m ready to go. I’ve researched the company and let’s do it. Just give me a computer and a desk and I’ll start making contacts, introducing myself. I wrote a press release about myself so all my contacts would know where I was at the very first day. So I hit the ground running and I think they weren’t used to seeing that. (Caucasian Mexican American

heterosexual male, age 45, director of public relations and publicity,
corporate)

That first day, his bosses told him that he needed to relax. Since moving to his current job which is a more “chilled” environment, he has relaxed somewhat, but the drive to achieve goals is still there.

Disclosure. The inclusion of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals in the workplace has not been an easy adjustment for some organizations, and making the announcement of one’s orientation or coming out was not an option. According to one practitioner who believed she lost a job because she was a lesbian, information should come out or be revealed at specific times.

At [name of corporation]—in American society it is still generally not appropriate or accepted or expected. And those are three different shades of the same thing that someone says hi, I’m [participant’s name]. I’m bisexual. I mean that’s just not part of the early information that you give to people, and not part of the information you give to people who you don’t have a friendship with. And just heterosexual privilege is the unconscious announcement of one’s sexual orientation in so many ways, wearing the wedding ring, putting the pictures on the desk, talking about your vacation, your wife, your son, your husband, your family. And it’s unconscious. People don’t even think they’re announcing their sexual orientation, and they’re doing it all the time. Whereas a lesbian or a bisexual woman, I know that set of information, and that’s not true of me.

So I simply don't mention it. (European American bisexual female, age 56, principal, agency)

Unchecked heterosexism and homophobia and the fear of repercussions and persecutions if they did reveal their orientation forced some participants to lie and deny their sexual orientation. They passed and resorted to subterfuge in an effort to keep their jobs and earn a living.

Location and timing had much to do with coming out. Because of their location in the country and the decade, many practitioners did not disclose their sexual orientation in their first job. According to one public relations practitioner who started her first job in broadcasting during the 1980s:

Nobody knew anything about gay people back then. Who was gay in 1980 besides Truman Capote? Think about it. I'm trying to remember. I think Elton John might have been married then. Nobody was out. Gay people were the ABC after-school special. There wasn't Lifetime then. I'm trying to remember when Personal Best came out. That was later in the 80's. Billy Jean King was married. Nobody was out. (White gay/lesbian female, age 47, director of communications, corporate)

Another practitioner believed that he became more out once he moved to another city on the East Coast. His previous job and city inhibited his ability to be forward and open about his sexual orientation with his employer and colleagues:

. . . Being in [name of large metropolitan city] made a big difference, because being gay there just isn't that big of a deal. They're used to gay people in the workplace being out. It wasn't true in Washington, DC

where I had come from. I had considered myself a bit of a gay activist, but I still operated under kind of don't ask, don't tell policy at work. That, to me, was being out, and that's what I think it was like in 1997, outside of maybe New York and Los Angeles. You just didn't do it, because you know what, you have to pay the rent. I would have never denied it. I'd rather lose my job than that. I didn't let people know, and I didn't do huge things to cover it up, but I also didn't talk about it a lot. So this was the first job I was out on. I had made the decision that the next job I went to, even if it was in Washington, I was going to start fully out. It's difficult to do along the way. (White American gay male, age 37, president, agency/consultancy)

Along with passing in the actual workplace, practitioners also felt the need to pass in other settings. As practitioners networked in informal settings such as restaurants or homes, some felt the need to lie by omission, leaving out bits and pieces of their home lives, or passed completely, bringing along dates of the opposite sex.

I have been invited to, like in manufacturing, invited to plant managers' Christmas parties and things like that. And of course, there's always, the invitation gets extended to the spouse or to a date. And it's one of those things where if you're not quite comfortable with them or you don't quite know their take on things and you don't necessarily feel comfortable bringing a same-sex companion along, so you wind up going individually.

Yeah, I've had that happen in the past. (Caucasian gay male, age 33, manager of product communications, corporate)

The cost of passing had tremendous effects on many practitioners. Passing took an emotional and psychological price on many practitioners. According to one, not being able to bring her full self to the organization, to be out as a lesbian, limited her personally and professionally.

I couldn't be myself in terms of being a lesbian. So I kept that secret for many years at great psychological cost. And I didn't realize until afterward just what a psychological toll it had taken on me. But when you lead a double life like that, it's very taxing. And you—I've read some of the literature where people have passed for White, and I feel like I passed for straight all those years. And I had to be discreet and very careful. I would a lot of times forego relationships, because it just got too complicated. And I was pretty much by myself for most of those years, because I just thought it was too dangerous to have that known. And I didn't really understand it to the extent that I do now. And I didn't feel very good about it. (Caucasian lesbian female, age 51, associate professor, higher education)

For another practitioner, maintaining the cover of heterosexuality placed a significant weight and burden on himself. That carried over into his workplace and his performance.

When I was not able to fully or I chose not fully bring who I was to the workplace that affected my work performance. I think of it kind of like, it

created a drag on this as I was trying to navigate through the organization.

If a person can comfortably bring all of who they are to the workplace, then they're going to, gonna be freed from the burden of having to invest energy in trying to cover up and invest that energy more in more productive ways. (White gay male, executive vice president, public relations agency)

The practice of coming out was treated by several participants as a continuous unfolding and unfurling process. The dilemma and anguish with coming out, according to many practitioners, is the process of revelation that must be ventured into every time a new colleague is ushered around the pod of cubicles. For one, it can be a challenge and a frustration. For another, because of the size of her organization, coming out became a matter of proximity within the working group and closeness to source:

The way I choose to do it is if someone starts to talk to me about their husband or children, I'm thinking, okay, we're there. You're going to talk to me about your husband or kids or about your relationships or about your life, then you're going to hear about mine. Will I initiate that with people? I'll initiate that with people that I know I'm going to have an ongoing relationship with, and it doesn't hurt if we like each other to begin with. (White gay/lesbian female, age 47, director of communications, corporate)

Minor adjustments for the mainstream. These are subtle adjustments or movements that people of color use in organizational life to surface in and out of the dominant, mainstream culture. Several participants found themselves having to

disengage from their normal selves and everyday lives to a more corporate or “White” persona in order to fit what was deemed appropriate for the situation or occasion. One example is a manager of the public relations department for a cosmetics company who has a different persona with the elite media such as the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* because of their perceptions of public relations and their assumptions of the beauty industry: “On the phone when I’m dealing with the media I feel like Amy, my inner White girl, comes out. Hi, this is [name of participant] with [name of corporation]. That bull.”

According to the practitioners, the majority of the time the changes were for the small things: changes in tone of voice or the use of certain words. In one case, the change that was required was greater: a Black manager for a public relations firm was asked by her bosses to change her name because her name was too ethnic or too Black and for the sake of the clients who she would be representing to the media.

He goes, what do you think about changing your name? . . . But he was like, over the phone, you can’t tell if you’re black or White. That might work to your advantage. He didn’t come right out and say your name is too ethnic. He was like, I was just thinking about you getting a shorter name so it’s easier whenever you do your pitches, more punchy name. At the very end of the conversation, he did use the word ethnic. I kind of just looked at him, because I wasn’t quite sure. Like he had been thinking about this, and he had a lot of reasons why he thought I should do it. He wasn’t necessarily saying do it, but he pretty much was.

(Black/African American heterosexual female, age 25, public relations manager, agency)

Humor. Episodes of humor between organizational actors were recounted by participants; these instances were deployed for a multitude of reasons. Humorous comments and critiques on behalf of the participants—especially when they ridiculed themselves or made light of their identity and their position—were done to make situations less threatening and more comfortable for members of the dominant cultural group. One participant provided a clear example of the first circumstance:

One time we had this meeting. And my co-worker had this like spiral perm in her hair, and she said, “This meeting is so long you know my hair used to be straight when this meeting started.” And I said, “This meeting is so long I used to be straight when this meeting started.” And like there was laughter throughout the room. And you know everybody loved it and loved that I was like you know, could joke about it.

(Caucasian American lesbian female, age 42, director, agency)

In this situation, the encounter was an attempt “to break the ice,” an attempt to show that this manager could blend in with everyone else and joke about herself. She was not the lesbian stereotype: somber, stern, and aiming for political correctness all the time. As this practitioner mentioned, “I think if I were to start to talk about my personal life and dating and stuff like that, yeah, I think people would start to cringe. I don't know if I've ever imposed that on folks” (Caucasian American lesbian female, age 42, director, agency).

Humor was also used to discredit colleagues who made insensitive or off-color remarks. In another instance with the same manager, a junior employee attempted to put down the practitioner. An employee she supervised teased her in the office. She commented that he had done a good job on a project and he said, "Thanks, Brokeback." Her response was the second type: She retaliated by playing off an oft-quoted movie line: "I quoted the movie back at him. I don't know if you're familiar with it. But I said, I wish I knew how to quit you because that's what Heath Ledger says to the Jake's character in the movie. And so, it's just kind of this quick comeback that I could think of. And I thought it was kind of appropriate. So I joked about it." For this practitioner, it is easier for her to grin and bear these encounters. She considers the employee harmless and used humor to disarm him.

To disarm homophobic comments made by clients and workplace equals, lesbian and gay practitioners would typically use humor to make light of homophobic attitudes. When used, this application throws the target off-balance, challenging and confronting their beliefs. For example, one practitioner challenged the homophobia and heterosexist posturing of his clients.

And [the photographer] wanted them, the 2 doctors a little closer together. As they're getting closer together, Cathy, the photographer, said, "Oh no, not that close." It wasn't a joke; she just meant she didn't want them physically that close in the picture. And then I made a little joke about well, this is for, part of our marketing is toward the gay and lesbian community, which was a joke. But one of the doctors especially was very uncomfortable by that. Hey, I'm not gay, kind of thing. That straight

macho kind of—which I laugh at. So it wasn't directed at me. But it's something that I remember that I just think is funny sometimes. You encounter that because as a well-adjusted gay person, I will make jokes about everything. And part of making jokes is ribbing straight people about gay stuff. (Caucasian gay male, binational, age 43, publicist, agency/consultancy)

Separating work and home spheres. A definite bifurcation of work and home life reiterated throughout the conversations I had with my participants. However, the distancing and self-presentation strategies took different forms among various groups.

What Black women wanted to do in the workplace was to accomplish the work goals and tasks they were challenged and appointed to do. Several practitioners were indifferent and hostile to the informal conversations that contributed to the building of informal associations and contacts and helps practitioners navigate through and up organizational networks. They saw it as a drain on their workday activities or an encroachment on the part of themselves they wanted to keep separate. According to one practitioner, the activity of eating lunch with her co-workers was too much togetherness and camaraderie for her; it impeded her time to run errands and get out of the office. Beyond that, she was a private person.

So I try to do it when I'm here on Mondays or whatever. But that's just not me. They'll sit around; they'll talk about everything that's happened in their lives or whatever. But I try to keep my private life separate. And you know, I am friendly with everybody here. But you know, I just kind

of draw that line. I draw the line to some extent. (African American heterosexual female, age 43, public relations specialist, corporate)

A young African American practitioner found her work environment difficult because of the number of people in the office and the manner in which she would appear if she did not act sociable or comply with other's demands that she participate in social chatter.

I will be sociable, I will be respectful, I will be cordial. What I do not do is bring my personal business to work nor do I want to discuss certain personal matters at work. I do not come to work to be friends... I don't want to come to your kid's birthday party. Those are things it takes time to establish, but my first priority is to come to work and I have had to tell my boss I come to work to work. I've had to tell my boss to leave me alone because I come here to work and this constant socializing, this constant inconsequential conversation that happens about your day and you throwing temper tantrums and you being emotional at work interferes with what I am here to do. (Black African American heterosexual female, age 26, communications coordinator, nonprofit)

Other practitioners were cautious about personal self-presentation and avoided engaging activities that would be seen as stereotypical of African Americans or Blacks in the workplace. These were deliberate and conscious acts; these practitioners engaged in subtle actions that refuted labels, typecasts, and perceptions of Blacks in general. They wanted to be seen as competent and capable public relations professionals, not as walking caricatures. For one practitioner, this included avoiding alcohol at the annual

company Christmas party for the sake of propriety and face, but she realized that the repercussions for herself and her White colleagues would not be the same. After a work colleague got very inebriated at the Christmas party, she discussed the event with another African American who brought up the issue of appearance and comfort among colleagues:

He was like, it's funny. And everybody's laughing about it. But you know, you could never do that. Like if you had done that it would have been like, "Ohmigod," whereas when George did it, it was like, "Ha ha ha, George got drunk." I don't know if my boss necessarily would have consciously been aware of that. But I think at some point, in some level he was expecting more from me. Granted I set that expectation in terms of here's how we interact. But also, when you fall or when you slip up, it's perceived as a large disadvantage against me as opposed to average White Joe when he does it. (African American heterosexual female, age 30, account executive, advertising agency)

For lesbians and gay men, this divide emerged because of a need to maintain comfort levels in the workplace, and this was done through self-censoring. Self-censoring is a strategy that integrates elements of avoidance, evasion, and self-editing into daily practice (Woods, 1993; Button, 2001; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001).

You know I have generally at work been very quiet about being gay. I have never denied it, but people tend not to ask. And I just find my personal approach is if I socialize with someone outside of work, then I'm open\ about it. But if it's somebody's that just a work colleague and

someone that I don't have a personal friendship with outside of work, then I just leave it alone and let it go because personally I feel that – Often if people know that you're gay and they have biases about that then it taints your, it can taint your work relationship, so they judge you based on that before they even assess your personality, your character, the quality of your work. So I usually try to leave that alone so that they at least get to know that about me first before introducing the other.

(Caucasian gay male, age 33, manager of product communications, corporate)

The choice to separate or to distance rather than meld elements of the home, social, and work life together is a pragmatic and political choice made by practitioners faced with limited opportunities of the social network.

Chapter Five: Discussion

My goal in conducting this research was to examine how power and identity intersect and diverge in the professional lives of minority public relations practitioners. To achieve these ends, I conducted interviews with a diverse sample of public relations practitioners—White lesbian, gay male, and bisexual practitioners; Black and Hispanic gay males; Black and Hispanic heterosexual practitioners—to understand their definitions and encounters with power, to know how they see themselves in their organizational roles, and to produce descriptions about their past and present workplace experiences as minorities in dominant organizational environments and as public relations practitioners. This dissertation is uniquely a public relations dissertation because the research examined the contributions of diversity to excellent organizational communication and the contributions of diversity to the smooth functioning of organizations. This work also looked at the practitioner's role and how organizational and departmental acceptance of diversity impacts the practitioner's job functioning as the communicator of organizational values, beliefs, and philosophy and personal comfort with the organization.

This chapter demonstrates the importance of excellent organizational communication and the connection between excellent public relations and diversity. As the findings of this research indicate, there is an importance in examining and understanding the interactions and contexts between multiple identities rather than identifying and analyzing identities in a piecemeal fashion. This chapter provides a discussion drawn from the interviews and also presents conclusions based on the data analysis and previous literature in public relations. First, I discuss the results as they relate to previous literature and theory. Second, I state limitations of this research and

suggest future streams of research. Finally, I give implications of this study on theory and practice.

Theoretical Connections to Research Findings

Discrimination

Practitioners put themselves into their careers; that included placing their identities—race, ethnicity, and sexual orientations—into certain aspects of their organizational life. For all, that meant shouldering the responsibility of representing the community within the organization and among individual colleagues; for many, that included formally pairing a role as a public relations expert along with a role as spokesperson for his or her community.

Sexism and the glass ceiling. The glass ceiling still existed for some of the female practitioners interviewed; however, few conceptualized or named those barriers as a “glass ceiling.” Of the ones that did call the “glass ceiling” for what it was, those practitioners were white lesbians who faced multiple barriers related gender, age, and sexual orientation in organizations. In previous research (e.g. Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Choi & Hon, 2002; Wrigley, 2002), female practitioners attempted to deny the glass ceiling or rationalize their experiences with institutional barriers regarding gender roles or norms. One of the factors Wrigley (2002) mentioned in her research was negotiated resignation, a type of cognitive dissonance related to discrimination. As Wrigley defined the concept, it is a mix of strategies that practitioners enacted to excel or succeed in the workplace, yet “these conciliatory strategies do not address the larger questions of whether the structure is at fault” (p. 49). This was similar to what I found in this research.

Practitioners focused on maintaining workplace balance and harmony within the status quo and attempted to adapt to workplace culture.

Racism. The experiences of racism that my participants perceived fell in *between* two types: institutional racism and everyday racism. In several cases, practitioners had to deal with, handle, or overcome the ideological frames that had emerged as part of the organization's worldview about the success, failures, and capabilities of those who were not the norm. Everyday racism functioned in the day-to-day manifestations of institutional racism—interactions between colleagues, upper management, clients and others who held and engaged in attributes, stereotypes, and perceptions of people of color and who initiated subtle discriminatory practices. The complexities of race and gender in organizational interactions are represented in participants' quotations.

Homophobia and the lavender ceiling. All of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual practitioners experienced homophobia and heterosexism in either their current or former workplaces. Heterosexism emerged from the ideology of the organization—either the client organization, the practitioner's own organization, or both. Homophobia was experienced in the face-to-face or one-on-one interactions between the practitioners and other individuals.

As practitioners escalated through the organization, they encountered some resistance to their advancement. However, this resistance was not an individual's direct actions or threats; rather, the resistance stemmed from organizational expectations, organizational policies, and social discrimination. As Kanter (1977) concluded, the process of "homosocial reproduction" allows for managers from a dominant group to recreate the corporate operation through hiring practices,

appointments, networks, communication patterns, and other outlets (Mumby, 2006; Ragins, 1989). This homogeneous breeding and grooming of managers reinforces the status quo and only allows a select few through, leaving others outside. Some interviewed practitioners pushed against these organizational factors, attempting to destabilize these taken-for-granted norms and create different dynamics for themselves and other practitioners.

The experiences of these practitioners are not anomalies or outliers. Ragins (2004) documented that LGB workers faced three types of workplace discrimination, one of which is social discrimination. This type of discrimination, “which can be subtle in form but potent in effect,” equates to a lack of access to social resources such as social networks, relationships, and activities. For LGB employees, there is a push-pull effect of being excluded from these networks. If one discloses, he or she is shunned and pushed out of future social interactions because colleagues are uncomfortable. For those who do not disclose, they receive the push, an entrée into the network; however, “LGB workers who hide their sexual orientation may need to maintain a social distance from their colleagues in order to conceal their sexual identity, limiting the development of these valuable relationships” (p. 44).

These perceptions were keen for lesbians in public relations, where they felt that sexual orientation and gender formed multiple barriers: the glass ceiling and the lavender ceiling. However, gay male participants did not see or describe their experiences as a “lavender ceiling.” The lavender ceiling was not apparent in the experiences of gay males in public relations. The majority of these practitioners were positive about the possibility for change. Looking at gains made in corporate

America and the number of lesbians and gay practitioners in senior level positions in local governments, many gay male practitioners believed that access to visible, higher positions in public relations was possible.

Pigeonholing and tokenism. The participants did not describe experiences of pigeonholing or experiences of being relegated to certain positions or not being allowed the opportunity to move into higher positions due to race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. This evidence parallels the majority of previous research of those who have studied discrimination and people of color in public relations. In their study of multicultural practitioners, Ford and Applebaum (2005) found that 70% of the surveyed practitioners did not report being pigeonholed into handling race-related projects. This finding dovetails with Tillery-Larkin's (1999) conclusion that the majority of the practitioners in her sample of African-American public relations practitioners were not pigeonholed. However, those in her sample that were pigeonholed had similar characteristics that made the opportunity for pigeonholing or getting trapped into race- or ethnicity-related work greater; some of those characteristics were going to a historically Black college or university and having a Black or African American mentor (Tillery-Larkin, 1999). However, Len-Rios (1998) concluded that pigeonholing was a relationship-building and sustaining tool used by organizations to best utilize their talent—the minority public relations practitioner. She found that the participants in her sample were the liaison between the organization and groups of their ethnicity and that this was a job expectation along with other job obligations.

The majority of participants in this study are mid-management, and all are college-educated, earning at least a bachelors degree. Almost all of the participants

attended predominantly white colleges and universities, and most have mentors and are mentoring people who are dissimilar to them in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender. These factors help in keeping African American/Black practitioners out of pigeonholed positions. For Hispanic practitioners, their demographics mirrored those of African American practitioners, and three participants owned his or her own consultancy or strategic communication practice with only one of the practitioners catering to the Hispanic audience. The practitioners were not charged or sought to handle ethnic-related work only; they had a mixture of clients and responsibilities at both the manager and technician levels. Some practitioners had a responsibility to translate work for the Hispanic audience and to work as a liaison between their organization (or clients) and the Hispanic community. These findings fall in line with research conducted by Len-Rios (1998) and Ferreira (1993). As Ferreira discussed, many Hispanic practitioners were boundary spanners, filling a gap between the organization and its minority publics; in this role, the practitioners helped “to narrow the differences by explaining to the organization the culture of its diversified publics” (p. 113). For lesbian, gay, and bisexual practitioners, the pigeonholing or acrylic vault experiences have never been studied in public relations; therefore, no benchmarks for comparison exist to which to compare this data. For all practitioners, the majority were not hired to communicate with just a racial, ethnic, or LGBT public or a minority audience in general; their job responsibilities and their clients and publics were diffuse and had a large scope.

Beyond pigeonholing based on race, there is the potential to limit opportunities based on sexual orientation and gender solely and jointly. However, when looking at the intersection of pigeonholing based on race, sexual orientation, and gender, the effects of

this can be chilling on one's career. The effects of those three identities were not seen in this research, however, pigeonholing based on those intertwining elements merits further exploration.

Stigma and identity management strategies. The strategies mentioned as possible ways for lesbian and gay male practitioners to manage their identities in their professional lives did not come into play for the practitioners at this stage in their lives. During their first jobs or at the outset of their careers, many lesbian and gay practitioners engaged in the strategies of concealment. However, as they progressed up the corporate ladder within the corporation or within the field, they shed those strategies and revealed their sexual orientation. For some practitioners, it was a slow reveal, coming out to a select few and; for others, it was an expeditious disclosure. However, when using identity management strategies, the practitioners did use a variety of strategies such as counterfeiting, avoidance, and selective disclosure.

Shifting, adjusting, and biculturality in the workplace. The occurrence of "shifting" or straddling between two cultures was evident in the experiences of both Hispanic and African-American practitioners. At work, they were relied upon for their skills in understanding the cultural nuances of their racial and ethnic communities along with the other job responsibilities, yet these practitioners had to forge and build a network outside of that community. All of the practitioners had established different networks or circles as Ibarra (1993) foretold, and all had a bicultural efficiency or the relative ease of slipping between the two worlds. They could easily maintain the friendships and relationships that they had built in either world without denying their cultural identity.

Social Constructions of Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

S. Jackson (2006) believed that social construction is an awkward and clumsy term because “there is no single perspective laying claim to it but rather a cluster of differing approaches deriving from varied theoretical roots” (p. 45). In all, social construction is a multifaceted process; a researcher must follow, decipher, and analyze many layers and levels of society. The simultaneous circumstances of race, gender, and sexual orientations created vibrant opportunities and strictures for the participants in this study and offered some insights into how the matrices of oppression and opportunity operate in the public relations function specifically and in organizations.

The identities of race, gender, heterosexuality, and homosexuality shaped practitioners’ interactions in the organization with colleagues and upper level managers and their interactions with publics and clients. These identities also shaped organizational culture and organizational policies as tolerant and accepting or intolerant and uncooperative. Identity factored into job satisfaction, comfort and authenticity in their work environment, and ability to conduct their work roles.

Race, gender, and privilege jumbled together. The overwhelming numbers of my lesbian, gay male, and bisexual practitioners were Caucasian or White, and the majority were White men. Therefore, the privileges associated with Whiteness and masculinity trumped homosexuality in many instances. In a female-dominated profession such as public relations, being male can be beneficial. That male identity regardless of sexual orientation can be a common bond, linking men inside of the public relations function to men who are outside of the public relations function but inside the organization’s dominant coalitions. Being male in public relations can offer a “glass escalator” to higher positions in the public relations function. The glass escalator refers to the “subtle

mechanisms” such as socialization, stereotypes, industry ideologies, and corporate cultures that allow men to advance precipitously and also “enhance men’s positions in these positions” (P. J. Williams, 1992, p. 263). As P. J. Williams (1992) concluded, the experience of tokenism for men in a feminized field is vastly distinct from that of women who are in a male-dominant field. When working in fields with high proportions or numbers of women, men may be outnumbered, but they still carry a social status—gender—that is privileged in the workplace, and their experiences with tokenism will differ vastly from those of women working in male-dominated occupations.

Power

The practitioner definitions of power were scattered. This is similar to the scholarly definitions of power. The practitioners in this research were conservative and more traditional in their views and impressions of power in the public relations function inside the organization. Power was seen as a tool. The first and second dimensions of power as articulated by Dahl (1957) and Bacharach and Baratz (1962) echoed the participants’ statements. Power was approached through the modern understanding where the emphases were on managerial binaries: submission and dominance, divide and conquer, triumph and defeat, and reward and punishment.

The seemingly parallel or synchronous merge between the practitioners’ definitions and the conceptions of power used in the predominant public relations work are not surprising. The construction and interpretation of power have been framed uncritically and simplistically in many disciplines—public relations included. Other views of power within public relations include looking at power critically through raced, gendered, and radical feminist perspectives, but those views are mostly muted.

Organizational roles and power. As senior and mid-level managers in agencies, vice-presidents and directors at nonprofits, and agency/consultancy owners, the bulk of the practitioners interviewed served as managers in their organizations. Therefore, the managerial positions held two dimensions with implications for power: the day-to-day functions of the public relations manager and the functions of the modern manager in Western business settings. Although practitioners coordinated multiple tasks through the day, they also had to manage organizational power and negotiate social structures in the workplace. DeSanto and Moss (2004) noted the limitation of public relations scholarship to distinguish between the actual content of the practitioner's job (the observed activities of the job) and the delineated emphasis of the job or "what practitioners are charged, or seek to achieve their tasks, responsibilities, and functions" (p. 193). In their study of British and U.S. managers, DeSanto and Moss found that the nature of a manager's work was not as strategic as originally proposed by Broom or Dozier; the manager role "embraces elements that fit partly with the traditional public relations manager role profile...but also embraces elements that reflect the more mainstream dimensions of managerial work identified in the management literature (liaising and networking with both internal and external groups, negotiating, handling disturbances/trouble shooting, controlling and managing staff)" (p. 192). The manager role as developed through Broom's four-role typology and Dozier's manager-technician dichotomy may be a positive rather than normative paradigm; it is a public relations paradigm that lacks insight into power outside of the roles within the department or function. What is missing from the roles and the roles research are scales measuring the construction and definition of power by practitioners enacting those roles and the strategies practitioners use to

achieve power within that role and within that organization in order to gain additional resources for their departments and empower themselves.

Power as viewed through the manager-technician dichotomy was eloquently expressed in the viewpoints of the participants who had power because of their function, title, and position and those who lacked power because of the lower position in the department and organization. The dominant coalition is a grouping of individuals in the organization who have the power and authority to set the organizational goals and mission (L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). As Dozier and Lauzen (1992) wrote, “This perspective argues, in part, that dominant coalitions—those in organizations with the power to influence decisions—have considerable latitude of choice, permitting them to devise environmental responses that satisfice rather than optimize” (p. 206). However, some practitioners relied on a postmodern concept called biopower to empower themselves both within the organization and in their personal lives. Biopower is the reliance upon self to decide one’s fate in an organization (Holtzhausen, 2002). Practitioners who existed outside of the mainstream forged bonds and networks within the organization.

Based on titles and responsibilities, many practitioners in this research could be considered managers rather than technicians. In the managerial role as conceptualized in the public relations scholarship, these practitioners were allotted a certain amount of power and flexibility in their roles. According to the roles research, the power inherently lies in the upper tier with the manager, a role Dozier (1984) considered as both empirically and conceptually distinct from the technician role. The manager is associated with calculated and intentional activities such as environmental scanning, program

evaluation, strategic planning, and deliberate and greater interaction with the members of the organization's dominant coalition (DeSanto & Moss, 2004; L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2004). The technician is relegated to creating and distributing communication messages; the technician is not involved strategic planning or decision-making. Power lies within the manager's responsibilities and function. Those outside of the manager's domain have limitations, restrained by role tasks and functions and confined within the parameters granted to them by the organization's hierarchy.

Empowerment. Interviewed practitioners did in fact express notions of empowerment similar to those developed by Friere (1973), Foucault (1988, as cited in Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002), and Spreitzer (1992). Empowerment was viewed as a positive contrast to a darker, more sinister power; and empowerment was also defined as a shared responsibility given to those in the lower ranks of the organization. Practitioners were able to be empowered and give empowerment through attributes such as trust and confidence in employees and through actions such as mentoring others, giving back to the community, and working to provide other avenues of diversity outside of the organization's mainstream. These ideas mirror Foucault's idea of biopower, in that the individual is an autonomous, responsible being capable of making decisions without the sanctioning rule of a hierarchy. It is also similar to Friere's (1973) conception of empowerment because the practitioners discuss having the ability to give and train their protégés and subordinates the tools and skills that will propel them forward in their careers and everyday work interactions.

Practitioner as activist. The standard definition of activism within public relations has been approached from the internal perspective of organizations, from those internal to

the organization gazing outward to the stakeholders. The practice and role of organizational public relations has not been widely viewed as resistance. Holtzhausen (2000), Holtzhausen and Voto (2002), and Berger and Reber (2006) argued for a shift in the way the practice is conceptualized. In their book, Berger and Reber considered resistance as two separate parts: a process of activating dissent and advocacy tactics in the organization and a professional strain of motivation that would push against the forces that discount and ignore the profession and its ethical obligations. The practitioners in this research fulfilled both activist purposes offered by Berger and Reber (2006) and also enacted the role of the organizational activist as defined by Holtzhausen and Voto (2002). These practitioners were influential in the organization because of the alliances across the organization.

Mentoring and Reaching Out

The modern idea of "mentoring" was extracted from the Greek epic *The Odyssey*. According to Kram (1985), mentoring is a relationship between two individuals that will change and develop over time. Some scholars defined mentoring as a dyadic relationship in which a senior-level, experienced individual (i.e., mentor) provides support, knowledge, direction, and feedback regarding career plans and personal development to a junior-level person (Ragins, 1997; J. E. A. Russell & Adams, 1997; Hunt & Michael, 1983). Ragins (1997) further described the role, writing that mentors are "committed to providing upward mobility and support to their protégé's careers" (p. 484).

Mentoring can facilitate the career development of the junior person, enhance the stature of the senior individual, and benefit the organization (Kram, 1985; Ragins, 1997; Thomas, 1989, 1990; Hunt & Michael, 1983). However, mentoring is not a perfect

condition. Because it depends on compatibility, choice, and similarity, mentors may seek a certain type of employee over others.

In this research, mentoring was essential to the empowerment of minority public relations practitioners. Some practitioners looked upon mentoring as a form of community uplift and a way to stay connected to their communities. Also, this activity helped practitioners find affective and professional networks inside and outside of the organization, and it also served as method for practitioners to exert their own power within their domain. Because of their experiences and insight, these practitioners had the ability to shepherd and guide another's career and groom others for higher positions.

In the organizational behavior literature, most of the research has ignored the confluence of identities on the mentoring relationship. Within the public relations body of knowledge, little research on mentoring exists. The excellence study discussed the importance of mentoring for women (L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002), but the importance and value of mentoring for minority women were not detailed. In much of the public relations research, the experiences of women and minorities are often combined, creating what seems to be a singular experience that denies voice to separate identities.

Social Support and Networking

Networking and building affective support systems were key negotiation tactics for practitioners professionally and socially, and these tactics demonstrated the importance of boundary spanning and buffering as demonstrative skills that practitioners must have in order to operate between the two social and professional worlds they must navigate. This research confirmed previous research conducted by E. L. Bell (1990) and Denton (1990); this research also reaffirms Ibarra's (1993) "functionally differentiated

networks” where women and minorities move between two different networks of contacts for career advice and social support and interaction.

Other Resistance Strategies such as Overcompensation and Disclosure

In addition to mentoring and networking, the interviewed practitioners engaged in a variety of other strategies to overcome their perceived barriers in their organizations. Overcompensation, as defined by Orbe (1998), was a tactic used when there was a lot of face-to-face interaction with dominant members of the organization; overcompensation consisted of working diligently and preparing extensively in the effort to prove that the minority organizational member was worthy of his or her place in the organization. Overcompensating in the workplace—doing more in the hope and effort to be viewed as competent, credible, and capable as compared to your majority peers—was a method of survival for several practitioners in their current and former organizations.

Another resistance strategy was disclosure. Disclosure is the surfacing of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons in organizational life and personal revelation of their sexual identity to relevant others in the organization. As a tactic, disclosure of an identity can disarm others who believe that his or her identity is flawed or faulty. At one point in their former careers, the lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants did not disclose their sexual identity, for fear of heterosexism, losing a job, losing respect and status in a job, or the location and timing of the job. However, having a concealable stigma—a devalued trait that can only be visible or revealed if declared or disclosed by the individual—creates stress. According to Pachankis (2006), these stressors include detachment from one’s true identity, isolation from one’s community of stigmatized others, the anticipation of being

found out (e.g., outed unwillingly), and the daily choice regarding one's hidden identity. The concealment of a core part of that identity and the maintenance of that secret is a time-consuming process. Smart and Wegner (1999; 2000) applied the cognitive preoccupative model of secrecy to those with eating disorders. Keeping the secret to one's self forced the individual to continually think about the stigma; that impacted the person's health and social functioning. Pachankis and others had estimated that the effect is the same for lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals.

The practitioners of color were accustomed to shifting and moving back and forth between two worlds: predominantly Black one and a predominantly White one. They acknowledged that there was a change in actions because they had lived and worked in integrated settings for while and heard from Whites that there was a difference. For many practitioners, school started the process of balancing the expectations between the two worlds and as a way to adapt to a predominantly White environment.

Practitioners also used humor as a way to integrate themselves into the mainstream and to tactfully fracture misperceptions about the practitioner's identity. The practitioners used humorous comments and critiques (sometimes making themselves, their identity, or their position the punch-line of the joke) to make situations less threatening and more comfortable for members of the dominant group. When LGBT practitioners needed to discredit homophobic remarks and comments, humor was also used.

Regarding the separation of work and home life spheres, both lesbian, gay males, and bisexual practitioners and African American women working in public relations maintained interpersonal borders with their colleagues. For Black women, this course of

limiting discussions of home life, family, children, and after-work activities and the desire to preserve social distance between themselves and colleagues resulted from the need for clear boundaries between their social and work circles, a want for privacy, and the treatment received in the organization, and the practitioners maintained these by manipulating or avoiding stereotypes and self-censoring in the organization. For lesbian, gay males, and bisexual practitioners, the separation between work and personal life was maintained because of a need for identity management and a desire to maintain a comfortable work atmosphere. These practitioners practiced self-censoring or a method of self-editing and avoidance regarding personal lives.

Disclosure, overcompensation, and other strategies such as humor and a separation of the work-life spheres helped practitioners control and monitor their social interactions at work. As they moved between colleagues and co-workers, bosses and higher ups, these employees made the decision to hide or reveal based on the context and content of the discussions, the comfort level, and the available organizational support.

Methodological Limitations and Future Research

Sampling Limitations

There is the possibility that my sample of heterosexual participants contained closeted gay males, lesbians, and bisexuals. If this was the case, these practitioners may have claimed or self-identified as heterosexual persons yet were closeted. If this happened, this lack of revelation regarding sexual orientation or lack of disclosure may stem from several factors, including fear and distrust. All of the lesbian, gay male, and bisexual practitioners in my sample were “out” to varying degrees in their organizations,

but these practitioners could not be identified as “in the closet” or fully concealing their sexual identities at work or others in the community. This caused a challenge, because the true tenor of issues, concerns, and possibilities was not raised. Since this was a convenience sample and the participants needed to self-identify, those unwilling or unable to disclose their sexual orientation were not able to participate. Those who were willing to be interviewed were comfortable with that segment of their identity: these practitioners were either involved in an LGBT-affinity organization and were out to some extent at work and in their personal lives. According to Morgan and Brown (1993) who studied the career development and paths of lesbians, those factors play a role in which lesbian, gay male, and bisexual persons will participate in research: “In the case of lesbians, it is reasonable to suggest that those lesbians who participate in studies are, as a group, more willing to disclose their sexual orientation, and possibly more comfortable with that orientation, than those lesbians who do not come forth (Bradforth and Ryan 1987)” (p. 268). The lack of racial diversity within the LGB sample was visible: the majority was White. This under-representation of lesbians, gay males, and bisexual men and women of color was problematic because the issues and concerns of this group of practitioners were obscured and not addressed.

The lack of inclusivity was not limited to LGBT practitioners. The number of Hispanic practitioners was not as high as originally hoped or planned for. In the original planning of this study, I hoped to interview 12 Hispanic practitioners, yet after extensive work with Hispanic communication organizations, I only managed to conduct interviews with six people. My lack of extensive personal contacts in the Hispanic public relations community and my dependence on large associations rather than personal contacts

contributed to the low numbers in this study. The decreased number of Hispanic practitioners impacted and influenced my study in two ways. First, understanding the experiences, barriers, and opportunities available to practitioners was muted in the midst of all the available data from other groups. Second, the needed saturation point was not reached with this group. Within this group like all the others, there were ranges of experiences, yet patterns within this group could not be identified. Once this data was pulled into the large set of data with all the participants, I could see patterns and reached a saturation point; however, within that group, saturation was not possible.

In order to make this research a broad study of different identities, a limitation or weakness of this research is a lack of unique voices. The immersion within one particular set of practitioners to understand their particular concerns, challenge, potentialities, barriers, and achievements was sacrificed to gain access to multiple sets of practitioners and access various but intersecting personal stories. Skipping across various communities of practitioners allowed me to develop themes that stretched outside one particular group. I intentionally sacrificed depth to gain breadth for the different intersections of identity.

Procedural Limitations

First, I conducted many telephone interviews and not enough one-on-one interviews. Face-to-face interviews capture an intimacy that cannot be replicated through the telephone. However, the telephone interviews were conducted due to the convenience of the sample and the proximity of the practitioners. I overcame the limitations of telephone interviewing by inserting more of myself into the interview and letting the participants know who I was and where I was located in the research process. I strived to

strengthen the rapport and relationship between practitioners and myself by being accessible, by being open, and by answering all posed questions about my identity and my position as the researcher. If money was available and I had the resources to go from city to city to meet with the various participants, that would have alleviated this limitation. Also, I only had one interview with each participant. Having multiple interviews with each might have revealed different experiences and given me deeper knowledge and insight into their particular situations and identities. In retrospect, a stronger interview protocol could have been developed with prompts that delved deeper into organizational identity, work responsibilities, and work relationships with colleagues. Also, I would have triangulated this research in order to produce richer, stronger research results. According to Brannen, “The combining of different methods within a single piece of research raises the question of movement between paradigms at the levels of epistemology and theory” (p. 3). Utilizing triangulation would have brought a different perspective and a different set of data to the research, and it would have provided another opportunity to increase the internal validity of the data (Brannen, 1991).

Limited Reflexivity

As a researcher, I was not reflexive enough in my interviews with participants. I also did not challenge my participants in their interviews; in particular, I did not question my heterosexual participants about their sexual orientation and the impact of that in their everyday work experience as public relations practitioners. It was an understood assumption that sexual orientation was not something related to them but some other group. This impacted my study because the non-acknowledgement of heterosexual identity reaffirmed the heteronormativity that exists within organizations and in society.

Being partnered with someone of the opposite sex is an unquestioned, assumed notion; other sexual orientations were something outside of themselves. With regard to the findings, the only mentions of sexuality and its workplace impact are from lesbian, gay, and bisexual practitioners.

Directions for Future Research

This current research leads me in several directions of where the field and the theory should go regarding future research. I propose doing additional research on lesbian, gay male, and bisexual practitioners—current practitioners and incoming practitioners—in public relations and strategic communication and exploring their career trajectories. I am also interested examining White male practitioners and diversity, power, and identity and an examination of Whiteness in the public relations professional organizations. The methods used to explore these issues are multifaceted: qualitative, quantitative, and historical-critical.

Power, influence, and public relations. Additional research about the interpretation of power and influence and use and abuse of those entities in public relations is needed. Understanding how power and influence operates in the daily functions of the public relations functioning, how power operates between the department and other functions in the organization, and how alternate and traditional definitions of power flow and work to help practitioners gain influence for themselves and their departments require multiple methods and demand additional approaches. Current studies of power in public relations have not dissected power based on demographic factors except for the male-female dichotomy. Outside of looking at gender, how practitioners of

color gain influence and acknowledge the operation of power strategically in organization.

LGBT research in public relations. As stated earlier, few research studies exist regarding lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and transgendered practitioners and LGBT publics. This study filled the gap somewhat by looking at a majority lesbian and gay male sample of practitioners. However, more research must be conducted in order to examine how practitioners encounter issues of identity, discrimination and opportunity (e.g., glass escalator and glass or lavender ceiling), roles, hiring, salary, and power in organizations. This research must broaden the current focus of diversity research in public relations and extend the research conducted in other areas of management that focus on both individual level factors and organizational factors that impede and push some practitioners to success or to leave the profession and organizations. Also moving beyond lesbian and gay male practitioners, researchers should consider the differences and similarities in the experiences of bisexual and transgendered practitioners.

Dilemmas and barriers remain for this research and the researchers pursuing this type of work. In public relations, diversity has been narrowly defined, constrained to certain variables, and stretching it to include these identities will challenge the dominant worldview of many scholars. Breaking through the perceptions of the scholars who review for journals and conferences is formidable but is a necessary step in examining the field of research and in gaining a greater understanding of how all practitioners operate within a job and with the challenges and responsibilities created from others' perceptions of their identities and their own perceptions of those identities.

For the researcher who conducts this work, the barriers of doing LGBT research in public relations comes on two fronts: the personal and the professional. Personally, the researcher—regardless of professed sexual orientation—will be associated and identified within the LGBT community. Professionally, the ability to publish this research may not be as easy as publishing other material that fits within the traditional or current and fashionable paradigms within a field. Also, if a LGBT researcher is doing research in this area either looking at publics or practitioners, the researcher may be charged with bias, may be viewed by other researchers with an inability to be objective, and may face insensitivity and indifference to his or her work. All of this may stem from ignorance of the topic, prejudice, or the inability of researchers from a dominant culture or system to understand (Hendrix, 2002). This research taboo has been well documented and observed among scholars of color (Woods, 2000; Burgess, 1997; P. H. Collins, 2000; Reyes & Halcon, 1988; Turner & Meyer, 2000; Hendrix, 2002; Thomas, 2000). Reyes and Halcon (1988) argued that the positions of race and position factor into the challenges of minority researchers when they conduct research on their own communities: "These systems judge the quality of scholarship from the normative perspective of their own cultural group... The obvious consequence, then of the tenure and promotion process based on White males' definition of research and scholarship is that few minorities make the grade" (p. 343). For members of the LGBT community, the argument would remain essentially the same.

Whiteness and public relations. The real and perceived discrimination faced by practitioners sheds light on a new area of diversity research and initiatives in which the public relations industry must engage in order to provide organizational justice and

comfort to all employees. When issues of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender are considered, the spotlight is always placed on those with the societal stigma and without the power. However, researchers and practitioners must begin looking at the norms of whiteness, white privilege, and the cultural, professional, and sociohistorical bearings that whiteness has had on the profession of public relations. Understanding how past and current White practitioners with considerable privilege and in the echelons of power felt and feel about diversity, diversity initiatives, and diverse publics can help with the training of future practitioners; acknowledging previous errors and mistakes in the history of the field; and determining the biases, stereotypes, and attitudes of those in decision-making authority.

A theoretical lens through which one could examine whiteness is the colorblind perspective or ideal. One way that many individuals feel they escape this paradox or dilemma is to ignore individual differences, casting and marking them as irrelevant. The colorblind ideal suggests that skin color lacks sociohistorical context; that the intersections between race, gender, class, and power can be ignored; and that one can separate race from an individual's identity (Williams, 1997; Thomas, Mack, & Montagiani, 2004; T. Morrison, 1995). The dilemma and paradox of the colorblind ideal is that the racialized groups—African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American—must pivot around Whiteness, yet Whiteness is an unraced entity. A set of identities have been considered raced but told their race does not matter, yet another group's racial identity is never mentioned or discussed critically. According to Williams, “Whiteness is unnamed, suppressed, beyond the realm of race. Exnomination permits whites [sic] to entertain the notion that race lives ‘over there’ on the other side of the

tracks, in black [sic] bodies and inner-city neighborhoods, in a dark netherworld where whites are not involved” (p. 7).

Concerns about diversity in the public relations field and the field’s reaction to diversity abound. Scholars and practitioners alike lament the stagnant or slowly growing numbers (depending on what data one prefers) of practitioners of color in the field and the anemic attempts from professional and business groups to recruit African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American students and media professionals into the field. This research adds another facet to the diversity concerns of scholars, practitioners, and others, stretching beyond the issues raised in the literature (L.A. Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001; Tillery-Larkin, 1999; Kern-Foxworth, 1989a, 1989b; Kern-Foxworth et al., 1994; Mallette, 1995; Sha & Ford, 2005; Pompper, 2004, 2005).

Implications on Theory and Practice

Power in Public Relations

My findings elaborate on the current conceptualizations of power. Based upon my review of literature and my discussions with participants, it is evident that there is a bias in the framing and discussion of power in public relations. The managerial approach to understanding and viewing power is limited to a one-sided perspective of observing and participating in relationships and suffers from what Dozier and Lauzen (1996) called “myopia.” Throughout the Excellence Theory, power is referred to and defined, yet the research used to frame the discussion of power is pulled from Lukes’ first and second dimensions. For example, power is seen as the ability to initiate or accomplish. L. A. Grunig (1992) synthesized the definitions of power from organizational theorists:

Common elements include the force necessary to change others' behavior (Emerson, 1962), an imbalance in the relationship between those with power and those without power (Simon, 1953), and the control of some over others (Morgenthau, 1960). The underlying theme, according to Gaski (1984), is 'the ability to evoke a change in another's behavior' (p. 10). (pp. 484-485)

Power is considered the force over another rather than an entity existing within a structure. The definitions of power and influence provided by Foucault, Arendt, and Giddens are not mentioned as possibilities for outside of the traditional management and sociology scholars. There is a greater ability to operationalize this view of power as described and defined by the management scholars and pulled together by L. A. Grunig (1992). Yet, there is a network of power in organizations that hierarchal models and titles do not cover. Every individual and every department in an organization is influential and powerful to some degree. Because of this, "Every group and individual is also subjected to the power and influence of others" (Berger & Reber, 2006, p. 4). Every organizational unit or organizational member can enact this power when it is called for (Daudi, 1983; Berger & Reber, 2006).

Raced, Gendered, and Sexed Nature of Public Relations

From the data provided by my participants, I believe that public relations theory has been based and perpetuated on the ideas of a race-neutral organization. The organizational, psychological, and management theories upon which public relations rests was originally theorized and tested among a selected, privileged groups with regards to identities, and yet organizations have been and continue to be diverse places.

There is an exclusion of discourse and constructions of race and sexuality in the development of public relations theory. Because public relations finds the core of its theories, tenets, and understandings in management and organizational communication research, there is a persistence and reiteration of race-neutral theorizing (cf. Nkomo, 1992; Parker, 2005, 2001; Ashcraft & Allen, 2003). The issues of a gendered and raced organization needs to be confronted in public relations as they have somewhat in organizational communication (Parker, 2005; Mumby, 1993; Buzzanell, 2000; Allen, 1996, 1998).

My study illustrates how organizations are raced, gendered, and sexually oriented as their workers are; these identities are present in all communication that organizations perform. This suggests the need for specific public relations theories that are constructed differentially by intersections of identity. According to Nkomo, “We have amassed a great deal of knowledge about the experience of only one group, yet we generalize our theories and concepts to all groups” (p. 489).

Requisite Variety and a Spectrum of Difference

My findings elaborate on current notions of requisite variety in public relations. Within the excellence theory, requisite variety posits that the internal composition of an organization should be as diverse as the organization’s environment. The results of this current dissertation demonstrate that requisite variety should be extended by looking at diversity as not an absolute characteristic but as a spectrum of difference within each diverse public and by integrating invisible or nonvisible elements of diversity.

My findings suggest that based on a practitioner’s ascribed and avowed characteristics, he or she is able to communicate with all members of a public. Sha and

Ford (2007) urged practitioners to research the avowed identities of publics because it is “critical to the development of mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics” (p. 386). The data here showed that the avowed and ascribed social identities of practitioners, along with their comfort level and attachment to social groups and individual assimilation and acculturation levels, are all deciding factors in how they will engage with different publics. This is especially important if the practitioner has been cajoled or cast into the position of being the cultural interpreter for the organization.

Identity in Public Relations

Visible social identities such as race, gender, and ethnicity have been the primary focal points of public relations scholarship. The non-visible characteristics of diversity and the dynamics of stigmatized identity have been overlooked and under-explored in most organizational scholarship and in public relations research (e.g., Clair, Beatty, & Maclean, 2005; Sha & Ford, 2007). The invisible attributes of diversity include sexual orientation, ability, religion, illness, and national origin (e.g., Millikens & Martins, 1996; Clair, Beatty, & Maclean, 2005). Sha and Ford (2007) listed religion, age, living arrangements, sexual orientation, and military veteran status as “underexamined aspects of diversity” that are important to theoretical development and practice. The examination of these roles here in the current study helped to understand the importance of invisible social identities in public relations and within the workplace and to understand how these identities can influence the social interactions with colleagues and the shaping of practitioner roles with publics and within the workplace. Acknowledging and understanding the workplace challenges and the shift in roles and responsibilities for

those who have (or have not) disclosed is important for improving practitioner experiences and building richer theory.

Application of Queer Theory and Critical Race Theory

My findings support the argument that there is a need to understand and integrate critical theories to the public relations body of knowledge and move beyond the current public relations research paradigms. Two critical approaches that can expand the current research are critical race theory (CRT) and queer theory.

Critical race theory. Critical race theory has been around the theoretical circuit in the social sciences for more than 10 years, yet it is a recent addition to public relations. Considered a form of opposition scholarship, critical race theory deconstructs and challenges the dominance of Whiteness as the standard in society; what CRT scholars attempt to do is “demonstrate that [their] experiences as people of color are legitimate, appropriate, and effective bases for analyzing...racial subordination” (Calmore as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2000, pp. 2161-2162). Brown (1997) considered critical race theory as a way to recognize race-making and the impact of the social construction of race in the lived experience of all citizens:

Critical race theory does often acknowledge the unconsciousness of white actions; an important goal is to expose...how this unconsciousness leads to acute and nasty realities in the lives of people of color. Yet, theory has yet to ask itself the much more difficult question—that is, how to communicate with people who really believe that tools that maintain racial subordination are race-neutral, people who are raised in paradigms of

meritocracy and objectivity and who steadfastly maintain that the law is color-blind. (pp. 644-645)

Pompper (2006) discussed the theory in a recent journal article in the *Journal of Public Relations Research*. The point Pompper (2006) made regarding the inclusion of diversity within the field of public relations remains significant, and her call and ways to incorporate CRT into the research stream are important. As she wrote, “Being conscious of race, ethnicity, and culture is the first step in what is sure to be a long process of adopting a CRT perspective in public relations research....Of course, such work is neither simple, nor risk free...CRT epistemology is a revolutionary step for advancing our research agenda” (pp. 156-157). No other application of the theory has been used in public relations, until now. This study, while not centering on critical race theory, found through data analysis how important it is to making meaning of data from minority and marginalized practitioners.

Queer theory. Aligned with anti-essentialism and postmodernism and relying on Foucault and Derrida, queer theory challenges fixed identities. The aim of queer theory is to alter power structures through the obliteration and restructuring of discourses about sexuality and gender, or as Goldman (1996) argued, to disrupt the performance of heterosexuality “and thus disrupting the hegemony of heteropatriarchy” (p. 173).

Jagose (1996) considered identities as unstable, fluid, and numerous and wrote: “Set or fixed identity is thus conceptualized as a cultural myth—a form of social regulation that denies recurrent instability” (p. 78). Seidman (1993) argued for a more advanced position beyond the challenges of binaries. Using the word queer as a verb to pinpoint and explain identity, Seidman used the verb “to queer” as a tool for social

change and reform. His goal was to dismantle social norms and political and social structures (Beasley, 2005; Seidman, 1993). However, scholars of color have challenged the idea of a unified queer identity, believing this identity as a domain of White gay males. Queer is a “false unifying umbrella,” a construction that erases the different racial, cultural, class, and gender positions of subjects “to produce a prototypical figure, unmarked by those social distinctions” (Beasley, 2005, p. 172). While the current study did not use queer theory as a focus, it did help to restructure a discourse about sexuality and gender in public relations.

Theoretical Propositions

An intersectional, diversity theory for public relations and organizations may help reduce the power of dominant systems that reflect conceptions of the inferior groups in comparison to the superior groups. Based upon the research observations and the conclusions and implications drawn from the research, I have compiled several theoretical propositions that help in the understanding of identity in organizations and the public relations function.

1. Social constructions such as race, gender, and sexual orientation are reified and reproduced at all levels of organizations, This includes the public relations function of organizations and the public relations profession as a whole.
2. The personal identities of public relations professionals are not separate, hierarchical levels.
 - Identities are looping and self-referencing.
 - Identities are intertwined.

3. The identities of public relations practitioners can influence organizational roles and functions—both informal and formal roles.
 - a. Personal identities of practitioners can be pushed into an isomorphic state by organizational forces. This isomorphic state is a condition or situation of homogeneity in the organization due to political influence, uncertainty, or other means
4. Identities in organization and in public relations roles are experienced along a continuum.
 - a. Individual identities can be expressed along the dimensions of the continuum, affecting the affiliation and alliances with others of the same background or identity in the organization.
5. The continuum is individually and communally defined (“avowed”), not outsider-defined (“ascribed”).
6. When practitioner identities are activated along the continuum, the engagement is dependent on the public relations practitioners’ social congruity, political alignment, and personal priorities.
 - a. The physical look or the ascribed identity of a practitioner will not assure the development of relationships with communities and publics outside of the organization.
 - b. The avowed identity of the practitioner will not assure the development of relationships with communities and publics outside of the organization.
7. A position location on one continuum does not lock a professional into on another continuum of identities.

8. Identity of a public relations professional is a relevant factor in organization boundary spanning—a key element in public relations and organizational buffering.

According to Hatch (1997), some organizational actors serve as both boundary spanners and buffers for organizations, performing two key roles for institutions. These individuals protect an organization's performance functions from environmental uncertainty. The buffer-cum-boundary spanner absorbs the major shocks and turbulence, allowing other sections of the organization to continue to do their work, and these organizational members also relay information from the outside back to the organizational decision-makers. In the public relations function, requisite variety engages the concepts of buffering and boundary spanning, and the practitioners engaged in this study demonstrate this. Ascribed identities must be avoided. Avowed identities must be considered and respected by the organizational community. Those practitioners actively performing and working with diversity communication activities achieve both roles fluidly. Diversity serves as a bridge between the environment outside the organization, and diversity when activated in the public relations function cushions the organization and its key operations, protecting the organization from uproar and from going astray.

Conclusion

The goals of this dissertation were to explore the framing of power and empowerment by practitioners, to understand the influence of identity on organizational power and workplace interactions, and to explore the management of identity in the workplace and in the public relations function. The research was conducted through qualitative interviews, and from the data, several themes patterns addressed the research

questions. The public relations practitioners in my research did encounter discrimination at the individual and the institutional levels; in spite of the discrimination, the practitioners resisted the discrimination. Multiple views of power were expressed by the practitioners, and practitioners achieved power and empowerment in their organizational roles through avenues such as mentoring and forming new work groups. Through strategies such as networking and overcompensation, practitioners negotiated and overcame the barriers in their professional lives.

There were several scholarly contributions of this study to the current body of knowledge in public relations. This research extends the concept of requisite variety and difference in public relations. The study is one of the first to take an in-depth look at the lives of lesbian, gay, and bisexual practitioners. The study and its conclusions provide the basis for a more inclusive stance regarding the gendered, sexed, and raced nature of organizations. I believe that this research is theoretically and descriptively rich and is challenging to the current, mainstream public relations research.

The acceptance and honesty that the participants illustrated in the interviews made this study and its worth possible. For all practitioners, acceptance was a factor in their satisfaction with their colleagues, managers, career in public relations, and current jobs. Practitioners were also willing to relate parts of their identity to me, because of their need to fully and openly experience their lives—social and professional, among colleagues and in their peer, affective, and work networks. Practitioners approached their work as public relations practitioners as a source of employment and career, and they allowed me to see some of what they experienced in their profession. This research is ultimately dedicated to them.

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research findings and to offer my interpretations of the participants' words. As Wolcott (1994) stated, "Everything has the potential to be data, but nothing *becomes* data without the intervention of a researcher who takes note—and often makes note—of some things to the exclusion of others" (p. 4).

In general, findings revealed some particularly distinct themes. Black and Hispanic public relations practitioners and LGB practitioners encountered heterosexism, racism, sexism, and occasionally all of these issues of discrimination at the same time. As research participants encountered these barriers, they said they simultaneously resisted and enacted countermeasures to avoid those pitfalls. Power was perceived as having access to knowledge; access and control of financial resources; holding a seat in the dominant coalition; and having a high-ranking position in the organization. Some practitioners melded the concepts of influence and power together, believing that influence was a necessary antecedent of power. Some participants, however, considered power as patriarchal and as an entity shaped by Whiteness.

Participants achieved power and empowerment in their organizational roles through various avenues. Being mentored and mentoring not only served as an outlet and a way to connect to other members in the organization, but it was also a way to exert one's power and influence in organizational networks. Practitioners who were senior-level employees also achieved greater echelons of power, status, and empowerment in the organization through their ability to create and develop multicultural communication groups or work teams; these efforts allowed them the

opportunity to transform their physical, operational space and their emotive space in the corporate structure into something that was welcoming and appreciative of diversity. This also allowed them the opportunity to pick, develop, and groom teams, thus displaying their management and leadership skills and talent. The interviewed practitioners built and maintained affective and professional relationships and networks that helped to sustain them as they navigated through organizational life.

Below, particular findings are detailed according to each RQ they answer.

RQ1: How do minority public relations practitioners understand and make meaning of their raced, gendered, and sexual identities in their organizations? How and how well do practitioners negotiate and manage their identities in organizational settings?

The participants made meaning of their identities within the frameworks of power and discrimination. In other words, identities were viewed through lenses of experiences with discrimination, lack of power, and difference. During their professional careers, all of the participants had experienced some form of bigotry and discrimination at institutional and individual levels in their workplaces. Some practitioners faced subtle and complex institutional barriers they labeled as glass ceilings, lavender ceilings, and tokenism. Others were subjected to interpersonal biases and discrimination based on perceptions and stereotypes attributed by co-workers of minorities. Participants articulated these areas of discrimination specifically according to their identities of gender, race, or sexuality. In other words, some participants spoke specifically of sexism, some spoke only of racism, and others spoke of homophobia. In general, the

main themes that emerged from these discussions were: sexism and the glass ceiling; whether pigeonholing was common; everyday racism; homophobia; the “lavender ceiling”; lesbians as a rarity in public relations; tokenism; how difference can be associated with being “cool” at work; and diversity-friendly policies.

Sexism and the glass ceiling. Several women discussed glass ceiling experiences, but some did not classify them as sexism. The lesbians in my sample were more forthright in calling and claiming their experiences with institutional barriers as such. For one lesbian practitioner, she noted that a former employer accelerated the career trajectory of a gay male while her career path lingered in the same position for several years. The below quote from her illustrates how she considered this a function of her sex.

I'm just very, very sure that doing my work with [employer], had I been male, I would have been promoted to vice president much sooner than was being offered to me during the latter part of my time there, because my successor was a male. And he was the vice president within three years of his arrival, and they were only getting ready to provide me with the opportunity for that title after eight years. (European American lesbian, age 52, president/founder, agency)

Another female practitioner similarly labeled her former experience a “glass ceiling experience.”

Women were just not viewed as being capable of having promotable ideas. And being strategic planners, and offering suggestions to help the bottom

line of the business. They were seen as either window dressing or they were seen as clerical tactician, technician type worker bees who just worked long hours, cranked it out, smiled and did whatever they were told to do (Caucasian lesbian, age 51, associate professor, higher education)

Although she was closeted at the time, this participant felt that her gender contributed more to her lack of promotion at her manufacturing job than did her sexual orientation.

Varied perceptions of pigeonholing. Among all practitioners, pigeonholing and ghettoization were issues of slight concern. All of the practitioners of color and lesbians, gay male, and bisexual practitioners working in corporations, agencies, and nonprofits did not handle or coordinate exclusively multicultural or minority audience accounts or publics. Part of their responsibilities, at times, included efforts in assisting with targeted communication efforts to those audiences, but these were not day-to-day activities. Several initiated and launched marketing communication and public relations programs for multicultural or emerging publics, and many participated in the diversity or multicultural councils in their organizations along with outside community groups. These activities were not forced upon them by management or were thrust upon them as a part of their job function. These practitioners volunteered for these assignments and excitedly signed on to participate in the diversity communication initiatives. An example of this is a public relations counselor working for a manufacturing company. There were diversity outreach and communication efforts to the lesbian and gay community, but these efforts did not include him. So he approached the communication officers handling the endeavor:

So I actually got in touch with her for this last [trade show] that we did and asked her what gay and lesbian media she had who were coming in because I wanted to get more involved. So she let me know. And actually I had already been in touch with the two gay and lesbian media that she had coming in as guests of [corporation] for the show. But then she incorporated me into their activities as well, their dinners, their sessions.

(Caucasian gay male, age 33, manager of product communications, corporate)

Another practitioner in a small nonprofit was the only public relations person responsible for every communication-related piece originating from the organization. Yet, she also had a responsibility for making sure the public representation and face of the organization was diverse:

It's like this week when my boss said our photographer is coming for the next session. "Make sure that they get pictures of diversity." And in my mind I'm thinking, if it's diverse, you can't help but get it. Do you see what I'm saying? Like if there's real diversity there, the camera won't lie. It will be right there for the camera to get, so why am I pushing this?

(Black/African American heterosexual female, age 26, communications coordinator, nonprofit)

Among the lesbian, gay male, and bisexual practitioners, there was sensitivity about their sexual orientation as the only identity of value to the organization. Although several felt a need to bring their voice into discussions on diversity and how to attract other lesbians and gays to the organization, they did not want to become "the gay PR

practitioner.” According to one practitioner who is the executive vice president of his agency, “That's just a piece of who I am. But I increasingly became comfortable bringing all of that to the workplace..... I didn't want to get typecast as, oh well he's only – he's the person that deals with gay issues or whatever. I'd like to think of myself as a damn good, solid practitioner of public relations who just happens to be gay.”
(White gay male, executive vice president, agency)

Getting compartmentalized into a single job function or identity as the minority public relations specialist was an issue for practitioners of color also. Several young African American female practitioners had been advised and forewarned early in their careers of the pitfalls of doing African American or multicultural communication solely. One practitioner who majored in African American studies and public relations considered a career in African American-focused public relations but reconsidered after talking with her college professor:

And my professor said, “You’ve got to be realistic about that. You want to work for a corporation and handle all their issues related to the media in general, not just the black media.” He said, “You never just want to just pigeonhole yourself.” And I thought I would do Black PR because I’ve always been very community focused and I thought it was going to be the best of both worlds. And I’m so glad I didn’t do that because I think it probably would have burned me out and I would have felt some frustrations. (African American heterosexual female, age 32, manager, corporate)

Another practitioner recalled her experience with another agency where she was pushed into certain account and not appointed to others because of race. This has an effect on her billing hours with the firm.

As you know in public relations, it's all about billable hours. And so when people are compromising my billable hours just because they don't have any work for the black girl because there's no black projects going on, then you know, that didn't really work for me. (Black heterosexual female, age 28, account supervisor, public relations agency)

Others patiently rejected the idea of doing multicultural communication. For example, a practitioner who worked in public affairs in Washington would not work in certain multicultural or minority communication positions in specific legislative offices because they would “put you in a box” from which you could not escape:

There are staffers who want to work for a member who's in the leadership. What's the job we always get? Community outreach. [laughs] I would shoot myself. Or Director of African American Media. What the hell does that mean? Why can't I be the director of media for you? Why can't I be campaign manager for you? Because I don't represent America. Very, very frustrating. (Black heterosexual female, age 26, director of communication, government/public works)

For practitioners who owned their own firms, getting buttonholed into multicultural or minority work when they performed a range of activities was a concern.

I think that's where I am actually. Because when you look at my client list under [name of company], you see that I was doing work for very large PR firms like Burston-Marsteller and Shandwick Public Relations. I was doing work for Ringling Brothers and Feld Enterprises. The bottom line is that they all hired me prior to my being out. And you know, they're not calling me now because all they have to do is a Google search under my name in [name of city] and suddenly it's all over the Internet, here's this major queer person. Because I have a very high profile. My suspicion is that they definitely would want to ask the question, "Are we interested in hiring somebody who is that out?" 'Cause I'm very out. (European American lesbian and queer, age 52, president/founder, agency)

A few independent practitioners avoided the pigeonholing dilemma by refusing to promote their firms as multicultural firms:

I don't look at myself as being Hispanic. I look at myself as being a communications professional, a crisis manager, a business connector. And that's basically why people hire me. Now some do hire me for Hispanic work. And that's fine. But I don't advertise it. It comes to me. (Hispanic heterosexual male, age 59, chairman and CEO, public relations agency)

Regardless of location, title, and experience, practitioners working in agencies, corporations, and for themselves experienced the limitations of organizational and professional bias and discrimination. Practitioners did not fulfill all of the pigeonholing functions as indicated by Tillery-Larking (1999), yet some practitioners did encounter

organizational beliefs and institutional assumptions that they should be, do and fulfill certain goals and roles related to their race that were not related to their job responsibility. Several practitioners realized before they got too immersed into the profession what they needed to avoid in order to escape being branded as a “race-only” practitioner. Although the majority of practitioners did not handle race-based or LGB-specific accounts only, they remained vigilant to not get stuck or pulled into only doing that specific type of work. Practitioners were comfortable communicating with their particular communities and working on accounts geared to those interests, however, they preferred working and establishing relationships with a range of publics and media outlets. However, the practitioners welcomed concerns and questions about their minority group and facilitated relationships between their organizations or clients and their communities. This echoes previous research on minority practitioners in public relations (e.g., Mallette, 1995; Tillery-Larkin, 1999; Pompper, 2004).

Everyday racism. A number of African American and Hispanic women experienced the double bind of gender and race, meeting subtle discriminatory practices from individuals in the workplace. These workplace interactions tended to be more intricate, understated, and less visible than blatant racist remarks like the one this practitioner encountered in her job out of college. She was helping to put together a client’s hunting and fishing catalog.

We were brainstorming about, I think, the catalog, putting together the catalog, and one of the models was an African American male. The model agency we had sent over several snapshots, head shots, because we asked for certain body types because for hunting they wanted bulkier

frames as opposed to the lean, thin prints that you see for fashion. And so those bulkier frames they're African American men or Hispanic men sometimes because we eat real food. We don't just lick lettuce for lunch. Anyway, the client said, "I don't want any colored people in my catalog." Point blank right there. So I'm sitting there and at that moment I thought if I don't say anything – at first I thought that my bosses would say anything and they didn't, they didn't say a word, but there was such obvious silence, and I felt like if I don't say anything at this moment, they'll feel like it's okay and the next thing you know they'll be calling me a nigger. (African American heterosexual female, age 32, manager, corporate)

A small number of practitioners did have these blatantly racist and discriminatory encounters at work. When faced with these, practitioners reacted by confronting the source:

One of my coworkers thought it was hilarious that he saw a black man eating a big piece of watermelon in the cafeteria. I had to get up and close the door and say, 'I'm so glad that you said that just to me because anyone else in this office would have tried to fight you. You should know that that's not an appropriate joke for you to say in this office. You are the minority. You should recognize that and respect it because you will be challenged.' (Black heterosexual female, age 26, communications director, politics and government)

A few practitioners of color had their authority challenged by subordinates and equals. Appointed into a top public information officer position, one practitioner had the responsibility of coordinating relationships between the public works and safety departments. Her main contacts were two White female public information officers who did not welcome or respond to her position or responsibility or acquiesce to the power of her authority.

So I worked with primarily the police and the fire department. Well, I was a civilian. That was my first strike, was being a civilian. My second strike was that I was an African American female. And so you know, we did this planning process and we would sit in these meetings and go through these plans and agree to things with the fire and the police department. And then they'd walk away. And it was like we never made an agreement. It was like they would change everything. So you know, I'm like, okay, now what's the balance that I strike between Sapphire and the professional who is the authority? I was the commander. And they were incredibly obstinate. (African American female heterosexual, age 52, principal, agency/consultancy)

Practitioners frequently encountered social and work incidents structured by racialized gendered stereotypes and perceptions. The most common one was based on the Sapphire stereotype of Black women with much attitude. According to Bell and Nkomo (2001), "A Sapphire is described as being aloof, rude, self-centered, and lazy" (p. 246). Hostile, rude, outspoken, hypersensitive about race, and an ability to make quick and sassy remarks are pinned to the women who receive the Sapphire

designations. For example, African American women who interacted with White women in a candid and direct manner were accused of being abrasive, forceful, and domineering. One participant, a senior account manager with a large public relations firm, breached the firm's laid-back atmosphere by addressing an issue of concerns directly and her colleagues directly and was taken to task by her supervisor for creating a "threatening environment." An issue had snowballed from a comment, perceived as threatening and aggressive to one person and was communicated to others in the organization before reaching this African American senior account manager again:

So I had to take the weekend to calm down and then I had to go back to each individual to clarify the situation, going all the way back up to the final person I had spoken to, which was my boss, to say, "I was not aggressive in any way. I don't know how this snowballed, not really a huge issue. We're working on it and don't really like this label." It's not fair, it's not correct, and I'm not interested in having it continue. (Black heterosexual female, age 33, account manager, public relations agency)

Homophobia. At one point in time in their careers, the LGB participants experienced homophobic behaviors from colleagues and clients. For the majority of practitioners, heterosexism was subtle, understated, and invisible. Supervisors and senior managers practiced "supportive discouragement," (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995) or disguised his or her homophobia as a concern for the practitioner's career. Consider this exchange between one gay professional with his female, heterosexual supervisor:

She did sit me down one day and said, "I know what the reality is and I don't want to discuss it, but I have to tell you your lifestyle it is

discussed and we're not going to ask you to put that away, but as your friend and as a mentor, I can tell you that if you're "too out", you won't go anywhere in this company. It just makes too many people nervous." And while I thanked her for being able to say that to me, I also told her I'm not going to be able to make any promises because I'm not going to stop being who I am. ... So while being gay in the workplace is maybe a newer issue, what you're asking ultimately is for me to be dishonest about who I am. And I appreciated her frankness and I knew that it probably did change the future for me there, but I do think the education was a two-way street. (White gay male, age 40, writer/editor/public relations consultant)

For this supervisor, being "too gay" was the display of symbols and pictures that reminded others of your non-heterosexual status. That would include pictures of other men of your desk "unless it's your father or you and your soccer team. When people ask you what you do on the weekend, don't mention you had a date with somebody who's another guy. Just gloss over that."

In developing campaigns for LGBT audiences, several participants encountered resistance from their clients. The perceptions and stereotypes of lesbians, gay males, and bisexual individuals and the norms of heteronormativity shaped the interactions with practitioners and the direction and dimensions of the campaigns. As practitioners pitched ideas and developed campaigns, they sensed and perceived homophobia among the team. For instance, one practitioner who worked a campaign for sexual health recalled the

duality of the campaign resources and the attitudes toward heterosexual and gay couples.

How to set the mood? I'm like, that sounds great. That's really sweet. I love it. It's great. What do you have for the gay people? Oh, okay, then you click on this other item, and it takes you to the gay page. And there's an icon for how to avoid syphilis, how to apply a condom, the most commonly sexually transmitted diseases, and they just went on and on and on. I didn't know what to say, because I was new to the account. You want them to like you. You want to say yes to everything your client says, and I really liked working with these people, too. I just kind of went, well, I don't know. I have to be really honest and just say that as a gay person I went there, I'd be really offended. They were like, why. (White gay male, age 37, president, agency/consultancy)

Lavender ceiling. Most of the lesbian participants discussed their career progression in terms of heterosexual men and women, comparing their careers to hypothetical and real straight men and women and often finding that they might have moved up the ladder farther if they were heterosexual and if they were male. One participant, for example, questioned her gender and sexuality:

Do I think I would be at a higher position in my career if I was male?
Yes, definitely. I also think lesbians are less scary than gay men, because women are less scary, especially sexually. Everybody thinks about sex when they think about gay men. That's all they think about, I guess

because that's all men think about. (White lesbian female, age 47, director of communications)

For one lesbian who had achieved a senior-level position at a public relations agency, socializing with her employees and supervisors was not a pleasant situation. She had the binds of being older than her younger employees and being gay, making her different on two fronts. With her superiors and colleagues, she was a woman, a lesbian, and did not have children. It was difficult trying to fit in because it was necessary in order to network but she felt that others were awkward around her.

I think it would be easier for me to be a straight woman 'cause I would fit in better. As far as social activities outside the office, people would feel more comfortable. You know, "Hey, let's you and me and your husband get together after work" or whatever. And I think it would have been easier if I were mainstream. It's certainly been more interesting for me to be a lesbian 'cause you do different reactions than the norm, so it's kind of a little more interesting dynamic. (Caucasian lesbian female, age 42, director, public relations agency)

Lesbians as a rarity in public relations. Although public relations is considered a feminized field boasting a high concentration of women, the number of out, self-declared lesbian women practicing public relations is small, according to the lesbians and gay men participating in this research. For the lesbians interviewed, trying to locate other self-identified and "out" lesbians in the field and attempting to network through mainstream public relations organizations and at work was virtually impossible. As one

participant put it, “I met one other lesbian...there's no lesbian contingency. When you look around, and it's apparently all straight women, it's not a field dominated or in any lesbians” (White lesbian female, age 42, director, agency).

Speaking about her experience in the business of creating LGBT-targeted communication and trying to locate other lesbians in public relations and marketing, one practitioner lamented that the focus of communication efforts was not the entire LGBT community but rather one specific segment:

And sometimes I get tired of gay men. They get all the attention. We say we target gay and lesbian consumers. We actually mostly are targeting gay men because they're the more visible and researched aspect of the gay and lesbian community and then of course if we're not looking at lesbians, you can only imagine that we're not looking really at communities of color within the gay and lesbian segment. (White lesbian female, age 54, director, agency/consultancy)

The general lack of awareness of the diversity within the field can be attributed to many individuals not associating lesbians with professional, white-collar careers. One participant questioned whether it had to do with stereotypes.

This is not a job for some reason that draws a lot of lesbians. Like in the corporate world, mainstream women or mainstream looking women are more accepted in PR. PR, you're expected to have a little style, a little flair, and um, be you know, well-groomed, well-heeled, and that is not your typical lesbian. (White lesbian female, age 42, director, agency/consultancy)

White lesbians in public relations have the twin barriers of gender and sexual orientation working against them in the workplace: the glass ceiling and the lavender ceiling. However, the majority of the women interviewed stated that they believed they did not face any discrimination or repercussions based on their sexual orientation. Rather, being female had been the hindrance. For two practitioners, being lesbian has been detrimental and problematic in the workplace. For example, one public information officer had a threatening and uncomfortable workplace because of her manager who made demeaning remarks about lesbians and gays to coworkers and to her supervisors.

Several White participants were aware of their invisible minority status and the benefits afforded them because of race and the ability to blend into the mainstream.

One White female stated this more directly than the others did:

If I walk into a room, I sort of look like them. There's a lot of females in public affairs. I'm White. I'm female. Public affairs tend to be predominantly White and female so I look like I'm going to blend right in, except I'm different. (White gay/lesbian female, age 47, director of communications, corporate)

This contradicts recent research, which found that race does not act as a buffer to workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. Ragins, Cornwell, and Miller (2003) concluded that "racism and sexism may not spillover into experiences of heterosexism in the workplace" because lesbians reported experiences of heterosexism on par with those of people of color and White men.

Tokenism. Some practitioners in the study were tasked or faced with being the symbolic representative in the department or organization. Incidents of tokenism occurred across cultures, jobs, and experiences. The majority of practitioners believed they were hired for their current and past positions because of the skills and talents that they could offer to the job and the organization; the issue of representing their group came up in particular instances when face-time with target audiences or clients of color deemed it necessary. One African American woman who worked with a volunteer organization recounted her experience of being the voice and face of the organization in one community of color during a crisis:

We had a situation where most of the [name of organization] volunteers that were coming through there were Midwestern and they were White and they were older and they were there and they were making decisions about what would be spent or what would be given to help the people to start their lives over again, and the dynamics of having a practically all-White staff, and in this particular case maybe about 80 percent of the people in [name of city] were black, right there you'd walk into one of the service centers and it has this dynamic of a kind of master/slave paradigm. Even if people were doing things fairly or whatever, it just appeared that way, and so I was sent down there to say hey, there's diversity with the [name of organization]. (African American heterosexual female, age 52, principal, agency/consultancy)

For other practitioners, the opportunity to be out in the community and participate with local partners was limited to interaction with the affinity groups

with which the practitioner had something in common. One practitioner shared her frustration with her director who did not allow her to visit the mainstream groups even though she brought up the ideas.

If I want to attend conferences or things, a lot of times she wants them to be geared, my executive director, towards my African American status.

If it's just something that I just want to do that is maybe more geared toward business, something with say the [City] Chamber of Commerce, then she'll send someone else. If there was maybe the African American Chamber of Commerce, then "Let's send [name] because she represents the symphony and she's also African American." At the [City] Chamber of Commerce, "Let's send maybe [participant's name] and someone else," or "This is a great opportunity; let's just send someone else.

[Participant's name], thanks for bringing this to our attention. No, you can't attend, but we're going to send someone in your place." (Black heterosexual female, age 24, media specialist, nonprofit)

The value of these practitioners was in their performance before their respective audiences. As tokens, they were granted special access to these groups because they had an affinity with these groups based on skin color, thus showing that the organization was sensitive to diversity. The organization allowed these practitioners access to these groups in order to demonstrate diversity, and the heightened visibility added credibility to the organization.

Difference as coolness. A persistent fixation with the African Americans and the gay males in the office of being the "cool one" or having the "cool factor" was

noted by some participants. However, the responses to the “cool factor” from the two groups were different.

Among the African American/Black practitioners, being tagged with the “cool factor” was an irksome and irritating factor.

There've been some instances where people will, not speak differently to you, but they'll be like, hey what's up or yo, what's up. And it's like, what's with the slang and the lingo? You're not going to talk to White girl Stephanie who's right next to me and be like, yo what's up. But yet you'll say yo, what's up to me. You what I mean, it's stuff like that. (African American/Black straight female, age 26, account executive, public relations agency)

For gay men excluding the Black/African American gay male and the Hispanic gay male, the cool or hip factor signified an awareness of cultural or social trends and a way to gain advantage and visibility. Among gay men, the “cool factor” was nurtured by presence of and stereotypes surrounding creative gay males in the public relations workplace. One practitioner perceived a halo effect for gay men working on accounts at least from the clients’ perspective:

I don't know how many agency people you're talking to. At least in my many years, most clients are okay and actually are glad to have the creative gay guy leading the account, provided he's on strategy and doing the work. Because they like the constant flow of ideas which is one of my strengths. 'Cause in a way, they see that's what they're paying for.”

(Caucasian American gay male, age 36, associate director of public relations, advertising agency).

According to the practitioner, the gay men working on the accounts were desired because of their vividness and their knack and ability to produce grand visions and ideas for the campaigns. Their creative talent and skill contributed to the clients' satisfaction and peace of mind, but also contributed to the agency's financial solvency.

Another dimension of the cool factor is the perception among several gay male practitioners that they were better able to discern cultural trends and fads than others and had a storehouse of knowledge regarding these matters. The ability to manipulate these stereotypes privileged these practitioners, allowing them to pivot within the function of the stereotype and use it to their advantage:

It opens opportunities to be engaged in discussions and planning whether it be for a client or brainstorming things or just kind of in general within the agency. Like people will tap us for what's hot, what's going on in the scene like the nightlife and restaurants and different things like that when they're taking clients to dinner or what recommendations, just kind of random things like that. (Caucasian German gay male, age 29, account supervisor, public relations agency)

The cool factor is based in identity signifiers, and for some practitioners, the observed signifiers are not relevant aspects that they choose to highlight in the everyday interactions with their work colleagues. For African American practitioners, many wanted to be known for their competence and skills, and they wanted the room to express their cultural identity. However, their cultural identity did not include slang and

hip-hop nuances. There was an inability for many African American practitioners to manipulate stereotypes because of the historical vantage point and perceptions of African American women and men. The cool factor played up by gay practitioners gives them an advantage in the workplace. However, this advantage is partly based in mainstream stereotypes and perceptions of how gay men should act and what should interest gay men.

Diversity-friendly policies. What contributed to perceptions of acceptance for many participants were when their organization had formal commitments to diversity as expressed through organizational diversity statements and domestic partner benefits. For example, the policies at his corporation made one White gay male feel more comfortable to be out and to work as a public relations practitioner:

My minority status happens to be invisible until I choose to disclose it. So, um, which I, of which I do. I found it much easier overall just to be and be out. And the company has policies to back me up on that. That makes a world of difference. (White gay male, age 47, manager of corporate communications)

A White female who self-identified as gay once worked in an environment where she did not feel comfortable disclosing her identity as a gay or lesbian worker for fear of losing her job or retaliation. Her current employer has a stated non-discrimination policy for lesbian and gay employees, and she felt a greater acceptance.

At the time, when I was at [name of previous employer], that was not in place. And I did not feel at all confident that if I was out, I felt very likely that, not likely, I felt it could impact my employment there. Military-established, it would have been a difficult situation in my view. So one of the things that appealed to me when I came to [name of current employer] is they even have stated non-discrimination policy for gays and lesbians. Now I will say, anything that I, most of what I felt has been my having come and – this has been the first organization that I've worked in that I felt open in, so I didn't feel totally comfortable at first just because I wasn't used to it. (White gay female, age 46, senior manager-media relations)

As practitioners looked for jobs, these elements, along with the ability to disclose their orientation and feel comfortable as who they are in the workplace, were paramount. For example, one practitioner turned down an offer from a headhunter because of the company's diversity policies and stance:

I had a situation where I had a head-hunter actually with the company that recruited me to come to Ford, so I have a really good relationship with them. They called me about a job working for Exxon Mobil, and Exxon Mobil is the only company in the Fortune 50 that does not offer same-sex domestic partner benefits....So I told them point blank, I would never work for Exxon Mobil. Oh, it's the environmental...No, it's not, and here's why. I do think I influenced them, because that job never appeared on their website. (White lesbian female, age 47, director of communications)

The push for employers to cover domestic partner benefits along with other benefits and to acknowledge the rights of LGB workers started with the formation of employee network groups. Many of the lesbian and gay corporate public relations practitioners who participated in this research were members or affiliated with these groups.

RQ2: How do minority public relations practitioners understand and make meaning of organizational power? What factors play a role in minority public relations practitioners' interpretation of power?

Power was seen as having access to knowledge; access and control of financial resources; holding a seat among the dominant coalition; and having a lofty position in the organization. Some practitioners melded the concepts of influence and power together, believing that influence was a necessary antecedent of power. Power was also critically considered by a few practitioners who viewed it as patriarchal and an entity shaped by Whiteness. Practitioners achieved power and empowerment in their organizational roles through various avenues. Being mentored and mentoring not only served as an outlet and a way to connect to other members in the organization, but it was also a way to exert one's power and influence in organizational networks.

Practitioners who were senior-level employees also achieved greater echelons of power, status, and empowerment in the organization through their ability to create and develop multicultural communication groups or work teams; these efforts allowed them the opportunity to transform their physical, operational space and their emotive space in the corporate structure into something that was welcoming and appreciative of diversity. This allowed them the opportunity to pick, develop, and groom teams, thus displaying

their management and leadership skills and talent. The interviewed practitioners built and maintained affective and professional relationships and networks that helped to sustain them as they navigated through organizational life. Practitioners of color relied upon the practice of overcompensation in order to overcome any professional threats or challenges to their personal power or their role in the organization. The subthemes within this research question are definitions of power, definitions of empowerment, the dominant coalition and power, and acceptance of the status quo. Practitioners held multiple views of organizational power, and several factors influenced how practitioners viewed power. Although practitioners viewed through various perspectives, the majority of their perspectives fit tightly within the frames and conceptions of power and empowerment as defined by the predominant, mainstream managerial perspectives and the mainstream view of public relations—the Excellence Theory.

Definitions of power. The framing and conception of organizational power differed between practitioners based upon their location and status within their institutional hierarchy and their experiences with past and present organizations.

For many practitioners, descriptions of power came from personal experiences with the control of and access to information. Practitioners acknowledged the importance of knowledge because of their strategic boundary-spanning role. In this capacity, practitioners positioned themselves in the communities surrounding the organization, integrating themselves in order to gather information. The opinions and insights of the community were taken into the organization to support or alter the organizational position on issues and to provide management with an understanding of

the public's sentiment on problems and concerns. One practitioner who described his role as a strategic counselor described his method of information handling in the organization as forming fragments of knowledge into a relatable, easier-to-understand information capsule:

I'm in meetings with peers and people who are few levels below me who are communicators, and sometimes I will bring up something that seems sort of random but then when I explained it a little, here's how I see this tying to that, it's that kind of you know being able to connect things and a lot of good PR folks have a talent for connecting the dots and making sort of synthesis between sort of unrelated things. I think that's something I've always been pretty good at, and I think it's something I've gotten better at as I've become more aware of my ability to do that.

(White gay male, age 47, manager of corporate communications, corporate)

In the context of power and influence in the organization, the uses of information by practitioners in this manner—purposes such as information sharing, intelligence gathering, and boundary spanning—were done in an effort to bolster the department's standing and to heighten the credibility of the public relations practitioner and department.

Others also viewed power as information; however, these practitioners saw the power-information dynamic displayed in a negative capacity. Information was used strategically as a bargaining chip in the political game between and within departments. There was a struggle between supervisors and employees or a shuffle between

departments regarding the exchange of information pertinent to the required tasks. This use of information and power had a pessimistic and off-putting impact on these practitioners. Frequently, participants cited being held hostage because of certain behaviors, including the intentional withholding and hiding of information. For example:

When you get into situations where there's a misuse of power, it's where you see people withhold knowledge, keep it all to themselves because to them, knowledge is power, that sort of thing. With a more open organization, an individual, that power so to speak is being shared throughout, not being abused. The higher you get up in the hierarchy, you have that decision of how you are going to use it. (U.S. White gay female, age 46, senior manager-media relations, corporate)

As viewed by the participants, the use and misuse of power for departmental or personal power can be self-serving, corrupting, and destructive. However, workplace politics—the use of power and coalitions in organizations to overcome obstacles and realize certain ends—can help individuals accomplish their goals (Spicer, 1998).

According to Spicer, “Given the nature of the public relations function (a communication function of management that seeks to align the organization with various stakeholders), public relations practitioners may often find themselves in situations demanding the use of influence, that is, situations that are political in nature” (p. 132). Organizational politics typically arise in the public relations function when there is uncertainty, when there is the potential for conflict, and when practitioners are in the upper levels of management. As the gatekeepers and boundary spanners for the

organization, practitioners are in charge of the organizational environmental scanning efforts, assessing the ambiguities in the environment and attempting to reduce and manage the turmoil in the surroundings (Spicer, 1998; L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2005). Also, practitioners negotiate conflict for their clients and organizations in order to keep the stakeholders in a state of co-existence with the organization. Third, public relations practitioners are integrated into the upper echelon of management. For those interacting within the management structure, they will experience organizational politics and begin to accumulate power and negotiate with others. For example, in Serini's (1993) study of public relations practitioners, the use of negotiation was expressly important to accomplish public relations tasks and responsibilities. Negotiation was a component of the power set used in the dominant coalition: "At its essence, power is used here to refer to the ability to evoke change and to resist forced change through negotiation" (p. 4).

Raven and French (1959) considered the ability to determine financial resources of a firm as a source of power, and among the participants, having fiscal resources at your disposal was another commonly mentioned view of power. Practitioners perceived discretionary power to create and maintain budgets as one source of power within organizations and public relations departments. A female practitioner who left a management position in city government found herself in a situation where she had limited decision-making authority and budgetary jurisdiction in her new organization. Her frustration with her lack of capabilities and the absence to control, proceed, and act in the best interest of her organization was evident in our conversation.

Here I have no power. Or, I have no means of support to do anything.

We are celebrating the 100th anniversary of [name of corporation], and you would think that that was a big deal. But we were told to go out and create events on a grassroots level with no budget, no money, nothing.

Now here we are, a billion dollar corporation, a billion dollar corporation, and we have no budget....So that means we have to beg, borrow, scrape and rely on our contacts to be in this – to survive.

(African American heterosexual female, age 43, public relations specialist, corporate)

An African American practitioner working in higher education public affairs switched jobs because there was an immediate need to be financially solvent. Also, the significance she attached to money and power was the ability to eliminate and cut public relations positions or tactics, which had personal meaning for her.

I equated power with who holds the purse strings, who has the money 'cause I haven't – I don't know, I have had to chase the dollar, going from one job to another. I guess that's, I guess because of my financial standing it's just been, just kind of has shaped my perception. If I had power, usually means if I had the money, I could get this done, I could get that done. Because without the budget sometimes they just decide that newsletters can be cut and whole PR departments can get cut. I really equated that power with money. (African American heterosexual female, age 48, public information officer, higher education)

These practitioners explained that those who can increase the organization's bottom line through penny-pinching or those who withhold financial decision-making powers from others in the department have some semblance of power and influence. For those who perceive power in this manner, the ability to control the access to money limited the functionality and efficiency of practitioners and the department. In terms of remuneration and salary disparities, the salary gap between managers and technicians, men and women, and people of color and Whites remains, and the earnings of individuals may contribute to their perceptions of power. Salary and departmental control of financial resources ties into rank and position; where you are located in the organization's chain of leadership or the dominant coalition; and your ability to access those in positions of power was another conception of power espoused by the practitioners.

Several practitioners conceived of power as being within the dominant coalition. According to one practitioner, she fought for her access to the dominant coalition, inserting herself into key meetings with her legislator and the senior-level staff and, if she wasn't able to make or be in the meeting, by asking pointed questions. Her past experience of working for her hometown's district attorney who did not consult with her on a major incident involving a celebrity taught her an important lesson. Instead of asking for her input, he wanted to go public with an announcement that he was charging the entertainer with a felony on the same day he was hosting a major event in the city.

He could say, Don't come back because [name of city] is racist, even though you're black. I don't think that would happen. I don't want—He

didn't want the police to preempt him and say that he was being soft. And I said, it's just not worth that. Just call the police chief and tell him you're going to charge him. But you're going to do it Monday not Friday. It's just three days, it's not going to make that big of difference. He disagreed, blah blah blah. Ten minutes later, he came to my desk. So I talked to the police chief. He understands we're going to wait. We're going to announce it on Monday. I was like, however, you want to handle. I feel much more comfortable giving my two cents and however you want to take it, you take it that way. I'm not doing my job if I don't tell you. But that's the result of being at the executive level. You have to be there in order to advise. (Black heterosexual female, age 26, director of communications, government/public works)

The importance of the practitioner's access to the dominant coalition is related in this practitioner's experience and credibility. In order for the practitioner's advice to be respected, and in order for the practitioner to not be excluded, the practitioner must have organizational expertise and be savvy about organizational politics (Pfeffer, 1992; L. A. Grunig et al., 2002). The practitioner must have the status, education, and experience that facilitates his or her entry into the organization's dominant coalition and makes him or her "likely to be counted among an organization's decision makers" (Berger & Reber, 2006, p. 201).

Other practitioners conceived of power as the role one occupied in the organization and the access granted through that position. According to one practitioner

in the organization, power was directly linked to the role one occupied in the managerial hierarchy:

Forgive me for sounding cynical. In corporations, it's what your rank is.

It's what your salary is. My second answer would be influence, and influence is great. But I've know people at very, very low levels that have influence. But really what matters in a company is what your salary is, what your grade or rank is, the size of your office and the benefits that go with it. (White gay/lesbian female, age 47, director of communications, corporate)

Other practitioners repeated similar statements about power, position, and rank.

For these practitioners, power in the workplace was equated with the prominence and level achieved within the organization. An accumulation of greater prestige and power accompanies a rise within the organization. As one practitioner simply stated, "As you achieve higher levels of job status or position, you have more power." (African American/Black straight female, age 26, account executive, agency)

Many practitioners used the word influence as a synonym for power, stating that they could not find a better or proper word to express how power worked in organizations. A few embedded influence in their descriptions of power unintentionally. Regardless of how the term was used, influence and power were intertwined in a number of practitioners' understandings and interpretations of power. Influence was seen as the way that an individual had the ability to change people's thinking and actions.

Usually when I hear the word power being bandied about I think people are thinking of that somehow the people who have it can simply by their say so, you know, affect the things that you and I do. And I think it's a lot more subtle than that. It's more like people will give more weight to what they say, because they think they are somehow more deserving of being paid attention to. Power isn't fixed and immutable. It's fluid. And the powerless have some too. They just often don't realize what sort of powers they do have. (Black gay male, age 47, writer/reporter, higher education)

Influence was often used a substitute for power. In scholarship and theory, the terms have common intersections. Power is commonly expressed as the capacity to get things; the ability to get others to do what you want them to do (Berger & Reber, 2006; Barbalet, 1985; L. A. Grunig, 1992; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992). Power is “the expression of capacity to initiate...social power is the generative force through which social relations and institutions are directions” (Barbalet, 1985, p. 538). However, influence is the exercise and the realization of that social power (Mintzberg, 1983; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977; Berger & Reber, 2006). Influence is the actual process and use of power to accomplish duties and for purposive action. The sources of influence are the same as those multiple bases for power (French & Raven, 1959, 1960; Berger, 2005; Mintzberg, 1983; Kanter, 1977), and just as power can be used as a gatekeeping function, influence is used to control information, resources, access, and actions (Berger & Reber, 2006). Small distinctions exist between power and influence, yet scholars note that the two terms are used interchangeably (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977; Mintzberg, 1983).

A few practitioners linked power to masculinity and Whiteness. Whiteness and masculinity were posited by male and female practitioners of color and White lesbian practitioners as dominant because of the people who filled the senior ranks of management in firms and organizations—White men—and how power filtered through society.

The way power has been traditionally distributed in U.S. culture and most international cultures today is based on a hierarchy that's dominated by White males. Maybe even patriarchy; it would be a better word. (European American bisexual, age 56, principal, consulting)

Practitioners' past and current experiences in organizations and the demonstrated reproduction of White male privilege shaped their views of power.

...Because realistically it's still very much a man's world. And we can say well, you know, isn't it great. PR is so welcoming to women. Eighty percent of the field is women. Yadda, yadda, yah. But the people with the power are still men. And no matter how you slice it, that's the way it is. And the same thing is true when we discuss in demographics in this country and the fact that before 2050, Whites will be the minority. Well, who do you think is going to have the power before 2050 in the culture? My money says it will still be Whites, and it will still be men, because they control the wealth now. (Caucasian lesbian female, age 51, associate professor, higher education)

The association of power with heterosexual male privilege or White male privilege is a critical view of how practitioners understand their position in society and “how we

think of and live in our bodies” (Halewood, 1997, p. 512). The simultaneous everyday experience of identity determines how people perceive and acknowledge the parameters surrounding them and the substantial advantages available to others. McIntosh (1997) called these oblivious privileges granted to those in the dominant culture “an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compasses, emergency gear, and blank checks” (p. 291). Beyond the individual level of experience or ability to maneuver in society, there lies the set institutional racial, gendered, and heterocentric practices—a vast terrain of what Flagg (1997) considered “usually unsituated assumptions that [one] culture is superior to all others” (p. 630).

For some participants, power was conceived to be a personal entity separate from the managerial, organizational function. Several practitioners commented on the facet of individual influence that dwelled within themselves, a source of ability and strength within their spirit that served to motivate and inspire. This power was based in the knowledge of self and self-identity.

I am the boss. So I know I'm queer. When I have worked for companies or organizations as an employee, they might not accept me as I am.

...Am I going to let the boss know I'm queer? Am I going to let the company know that I'm queer? In this case, I don't have to say anything.

The boss knows I'm queer 'cause I am the boss. (European American lesbian and queer, age 52, president/founder, agency)

During the “power” word association, one firm owner mentioned the word “dyke” in jest and answered in response:

I meant me. [laughter] I mean powerful lesbians who are owning who they are, I just think that there's such power in knowing yourself.

Authenticity, man—that's it, to be authentic everyday, all the time.

That's not who you are. If you don't know who you are, that's where the trouble is. (White/Caucasian lesbian female, age 54, director, agency)

Definitions of empowerment. Tied to the concept of power is the idea of empowerment. Popular among a great number of the participants was the perception of power being a negative entity, yet empowerment was perceived in a more positive light. The widely held and expressed belief was that empowerment meant shared accountability and responsibility to the employees in the lower ranks and layers of the system. According to one participant, it is the flexible bond of trust between the employee and management that enables work to get done, allowing the employees the means and ability to do that work:

...I'm able to make decisions about staffing, how we get the work done, who's engaged in the work, when they're engaged, and I don't have to vet that constantly through the senior management to get the work done, that there's a sense of trust that [name of participant] understand our business model, she understands our financials, she understands our client's service model, and we can trust that she's going to make the right decisions to get it done, to benefit the client and to benefit [name of agency]. (Black heterosexual female, age 33, account manager, public relations agency)

Practitioners achieved this trust through having reliable, competent practices, by following through on promises, and by delivering a stream of consistent, creative work. Or, as the practitioner quoted above, surmised, trust and confidence were gained because practitioners understand that one does not put his or her “managers in situations where they got blindsided or more surprised by something or just in a bad situation internally or externally.”

Another participant who serves a managing partner in a public relations firm he owns expressed the belief that empowerment worked to enable those within the lower levels of the organization: “I don't want to be involved in each and every decision on the account. I want to be informed, but I want them to be able make their own decisions. And that's part of the learning process. Part of the way you learn how to service an account is that you learn how not to service an account. You learn through experience.”

Dominant coalition and power. According to the Excellence Theory, the public relations practitioners’ connection to and membership in the dominant coalition demonstrated their credibility, their connection to the senior leadership in the organization and the esteem in which the management held their work, their skills, and the public relations department. Some of the practitioners in this research worked outside of the dominant coalition and were not privy to access and consultation with this group. Many practitioners, because of their status as contracted agencies and their formal title, had greater reception and latitude with the group. However, almost all practitioners acknowledged that the dominant coalition was a shifting and flexible

alliance with different capabilities and experiences to each coalition. An example of this situation was expressed by a practitioner in the following quotation:

And I think because we have a small office, like it's not uncommon to be directly engaged on a day-to-day basis with senior managers. Um, whether you could be in client meetings, whether you're doing brainstorming, whether they're doing strategic planning – when I was in [name of city where agency office is located], my supervisor was the VP, was very good about pulling me into things, whether it's talking about client needs or client happenings or whether it was a crisis or whether it's hey, what do you think about this. Because we are a small office and we only have like 30 professionals between the two offices, you can't help but engage with your senior managers. They're very much integrated into the everyday client business which I don't think is something that necessarily happens in say a larger organization per se. (African American/Black straight female, age 26, account executive, public relations agency)

Most practitioners were located in middle management, having some or great input into the decision-making of the department. These practitioners did have contact with the coalition and a tighter working relationship with the leadership in their direct department and the overall organization.

Several practitioners considered themselves outside of the circle of power, and this was by choice and by circumstance. For example, one practitioner who was head of a university public relations department did not want to be considered powerful.

Another practitioner who sat outside of the dominant coalition did not have any power in her role, yet her work in media relations was respected in the organization.

Acceptance of status quo. Depending on the participants' situated identity in the organization, most participants tolerated or embraced the status quo. In cases where the status quo was tolerated or actively embraced, Whiteness and maleness were the central identities. Regardless of the other identities operating, these were at the forefront.

White male privilege was identified and highlighted by a significant number of White gay male participants. The connection and operation between their gender, classed, and raced identities was noted by the White gay male participants. This was always in contrast to their invisible minority status as gay men. They were different from the mainstream, but the ease of being White men in society was documented and commented upon as something that gave them a familiarity or comfort with everyone else in the organization's power structure and the access, reception, and ability to do and move in and around organizations. Some expressed minor discomfort and hesitancy with their privilege:

In most cases, people do not bring it up in most business situations, so.

And I think being White and male in our culture, there is a White male privilege. Sort of an entrée into a lot of things here. So I'm not saying I'm leveraging that. It's just kind of the way it is. So I really have not experienced a downside to it that I'm aware of. My career seems to be going well. (White American gay male, age 47, manager of corporate communications, corporate)

Others were more unabashed in the acknowledgement of that privilege and the role that they have in the functioning within that mechanism. One practitioner cast the fault for the privilege on society and took advantage of it in the business setting:

Well, White male is great, because the truth of the matter is, like it or not, America is run by old White men, and I'm an old White man. So that part of me slips right in, unnoticed. It's very comfortable, because that's just kind of the way of the world, and I'm on the right side of that particular fence. Without arguing that, that's good, bad, or indifferent, that's just the way it goes. So when I'm on the face of it, I'm very straight acting, and I'm a very middle-aged looking guy, and well dressed, and all that stuff, and I've got good business manners, and social manners, so I fit right in. (Anglo Swiss-German exclusively gay male, age 50, president, consultancy)

Flagg (1997) noted that many in the dominant culture operate in a veil of transparency, not thinking about their identities or behaviors, experiences, norms, or perspectives that are identity-specific. Regarding race, Flagg wrote that "transparency often is the mechanism through which white [sic] decision makers who disavow white supremacy impose white norms on blacks [sic]" (p. 629). For Caucasian males of any sexual orientation, Whiteness carries no racial burdens or responsibilities. Instead it grants one certain distinguishing features in business society. As Flagg noted, "Whiteness attains opacity, becomes apparent to the white [sic] mind only in relation to, and in contrast with, the "color" of nonwhite"

(p. 629). However, for gay practitioners, there is the ability to see themselves as outsiders within (P. H. Collins, 2000), as belonging and being shunned because they possess a stigmatized identity that is not welcomed in many circles of organizations dominated by heterocentric values and headed by heterosexual White males. Although their race or color may allow them to fit into the dominant power structure of organizations, their sexual orientation is the unprivileged identity and can cause friction between and with others in and outside the organization. These practitioners do cast themselves in both identities and are able to see their places and positions and share the ability to acknowledge the structural barriers and privileges accounted and disavowed to them because of race, gender, and sexual orientation.

RQ3: How do minority public relations practitioners negotiate and/or challenge any perceived constraints resulting from organizational power?

The participants negotiated or challenged the constraints they perceived as outcomes of their identities and lack of power in their organizations. Their methods of resistance and challenge took shape in a variety of ways: mentoring, reaching out for more diversity, dominant coalition membership, social support and networking, overcompensation, disclosure, making minor adjustments for the mainstream, humor, and separating work and home spheres.

Mentoring. Within the day-to-day organizational lives and experiences of practitioners and the stories practitioners told to express their daily circumstances and encounters, power or empowerment was not mentioned by name. However,

practitioners used various avenues of power and empowerment in a multitude of ways to achieve particular outcomes to benefit their careers and to help others along the way.

For all practitioners, mentoring was a source of empowerment and gave them a sense of mindfulness and consciousness. These activities were ways to stay rooted in the community and act in a professional role. For African American professionals, the aspects of mentoring and community involvement were tied to the ideas of civic uplift, watching out for your brother or sister, and spirituality. In the case of one practitioner, the seamless application and incorporation of faith into her professional life has inspired her to work with her colleagues and others in the field to develop their talent and potential. “I think part of it is my upbringing and part of it is my faith. I believe that you can’t enjoy alone. I honestly believe to whom much has been given, much is expected. I don’t make a conscious decision on that. I just think that that’s what I, what everybody’s supposed to do, and it comes very naturally to me” (Black heterosexual female, age 43, executive vice president, public relations agency). This was not the case for all racioethnic groups. According to one Hispanic practitioner, community involvement, which included volunteering time to public relations groups and mentoring, was atypical within their community. This Cuban American practitioner recalled her mother looking at her working on various committees and volunteering on various groups. “My mother would look at me and ask why are you doing it? What does it mean to you financially? If you are struggling, money is what is important, giving your time away is incongruous” (White American Hispanic heterosexual female, president, consultancy).

Several professionals of color and LGB professionals mentioned that they served as mentors to employees with fewer years of experience and to those under their command. One Black female agency practitioner made it a point to introduce herself to the new interns of color at her organization, take them to lunch, and take time out for informational interviews and multicultural internship and recruitment fairs. An agency vice president acted as a connector for her protégés, finding routes and inroads for them to relate to and link up with the superiors and influencers in the organization. She provided an illustration:

The other day I was coming back from New York with the guy who heads our office with whom I have a very lively relationship and I said, “There’s a group of young people that I really want you to meet. I know you know them, but I want you to know them well. And I think they’re very promising and I want them on your screen.” He said, “Who is it? I’ll meet with them.” So I gave him the names. He looked at it. He said, “Are there any White people on your list?” [laughter] I had to laugh. I said no. I said, “Cause you know they know how to work it.” I said, “I’m working with those that don’t. The White girls know how to get to you. And the White boys know how to get to you.” I said, “No, I’m working with those who are naturally not going to sort of operate like that.” (Black heterosexual female, age 43, executive vice president, public relations agency)

These practitioners used their organizational insight to help newer employees establish their footing and employed their administrative power as a springboard for their

protégés to meet and network with senior managers and other influential decision makers in the field and the organization.

Although some of the practitioners were actively mentoring and had mentors inside and outside their organizations, few did not have the mentor-protégé relationship for themselves. These practitioners acknowledged the importance of mentoring and lamented the guidance and support a mentor could have had on their career:

I really wish I had that mentor who I could ask, “How do I deal with this immature vice president?” I would feel more empowered, have an ally. Or if there were more female directors of my age, I didn't kinda feel like the only one blowing the breeze by myself. Strength in numbers, I feel like there were more of us, the more people that fit my experience level, age, and I'm sure if she were lesbian that would be great. (Caucasian lesbian female, age 42, director, public relations agency)

When one public relations counselor lost an account, she did not have the professional support or guidance that a mentor could offer. She recognized the benefits of a mentor as she was going through that situation and realized how unprepared and isolated she was.

I was so ill equipped for it, Natalie, because it quite frankly had not happened to me very often—it has not certainly happened to me on that level. And I felt very alone. I didn't have anyone, I didn't feel that that I had any person, any professional woman or man that I could call and say, “This just happened, and I don't need consultation from a personal perspective. I can get that from my mother or my husband. But I need

consultation and counsel on what do I, how do I deal with this public failure, how I do conduct myself, how do I pickup, how do I get my spirit back.” And I didn’t have anyone besides my family and I found myself grasping for straws within my organization and throughout my career of anyone that I could call. (Black heterosexual female, age 43, executive vice president, public relations agency)

She found solace in a family friend who was a senior executive in a related field, but this practitioner does not consider herself as having a mentor yet.

Reaching out for more diversity. Several high-level practitioners had been asked to lead or develop specialized communication outreach efforts for particular publics or audiences. The move to develop African American, Hispanic, multicultural, and/or LGBT-specific targeted public relations or marketing communication groups originated from different locations within the various organizations, but all the practitioners who headed these practices saw leading these groups as a leap in status and influence and as methods to gain some power and empowerment. According to one practitioner who headed an LGBT-targeted communication effort, other practitioners generated the idea, but he decided to take the lead on the agency’s communication group for the betterment of his career.

I see it as an opportunity for me to develop my leadership skills and demonstrate my capabilities on a broader scale than just in this office. I see it as an opportunity to demonstrate that a good idea can really take you places. Not that it was really my idea to have this practice, it wasn't. I wish it had been, but it wasn't. But I certainly played a big role in taking the

idea and making it happen. I've certainly seen the benefits of that, in terms of lots of opportunities to work on some interesting activities. (White gay male, age 38, senior vice president, public relations firm)

For a Black heterosexual female working at a global agency, developing a multicultural practice was a career move sparked by a professional “debacle” that has given her greater access and exposure within the company network and the opportunity to create more professionals of color in the field:

And so for me, it has given me the power base and the independence and the autonomy that I wanted. It has given me an opportunity to create something and even before I was doing this, I liked my space. I liked the space in which I operated and I like, and it's important to me that there are more of me. . . . I have a woman that works for me now, and she's amazing. And part of her evaluation is to find more people like her to bring them here and grow and develop them. And she is doing an amazing block of work. And I look at her and it almost brings me to tears because I see me. And I need to see more of me within the organization. I need to see more me on the street. I need to see more, more me in our industry. And this sounds so, oh it's all about me and it's good kind of thing. But I really do think that, I hope that people enjoy their space as I describe it as much I enjoy mine. I like my organization. I like my place in the organization. I like my stature in the organization. I like my autonomy. (Black heterosexual female, age 43, executive vice president, public relations agency)

Dominant coalition membership. The public relations practitioner's membership and connection to the dominant coalition demonstrated their connections to the senior leadership in the organization and the esteem in which the management holds their skills and the public relations department's technical and managerial competencies.

Practitioners acknowledged that the dominant coalitions within the organization were shifting and flexible alliances with different allegiances. Therefore, they had to demonstrate different capabilities and expectations for each. Most practitioners were located in middle management, having some or great input into the decision-making of the department. These practitioners did have a tightly coupled, working relationship with their supervisors and more loosely coupled working relationships with the higher management.

Several practitioners considered themselves outside of the circle of power, and this was partly by choice and by circumstance. Several practitioners who viewed power as a power over entity did not seek power for themselves, did not try to acquire management positions, or did not attempt to secure access for public relations within the decision-making structure of their organization. They preferred to be left alone to create, write, and do the tasks their department was assigned and challenged to do. For example, one participant who was the head of her university's public affairs department did not want to be considered powerful. Rather, her goal was to establish and maintain a successful media relations department for college. To her, her role and responsibility were "to support the mission of the college and to give attention to enough of, a broad, the whole gamut of schools. We have four different schools. To try to balance

coverage, so that nobody feels left out.” (White Jewish lesbian female, age 51, director of communication, higher education)

Two practitioners who were outside of the dominant coalition did not have any power in their departments, contributing to the decision-making for the department. Yet their tactical work, especially in media relations, was respected in the organization.

According to one:

I have complete autonomy as to how an event should be scheduled, or how I should promote my areas. Of course, you work with the developing officers in each area. You work with people in each area. But as far as media, the decisions are mine. It's sort of like I have a mini-PR [office], even though I'm within a larger office, but my area is mine. And I handle it as I want it, always conferring with each institute, each school and their needs and listening to what they have to say. But coming to decisions of okay, this is where I think we should place more emphasis, or here are the publications or media outlets that we should stress in this particular instance, here are the kind of stories that I see should be highlighted, that type of thing. (Black Cuban American heterosexual female, age 52, higher education)

Social support and networking. For practitioners of color who had other professionals of color in their work group or within the organization, finding and building community at work were essential tactics. Almost all the African American/Black practitioners interviewed who worked in a corporate or agency setting sought out other African American/Black employees or other employees of color in

their agencies and corporations for comfort, support, guidance, and friendships to get through the workday and to understand events that transpired in the workplace. One executive pulled together a group of African American practitioners regularly for affinity and encouragement:

But I think in all organizations that I've been in there's always a tendency of the Black people to coalesce together socially and to go to each other for support and after a meeting, "Can you believe that shit?" kind of thing, that type of thing which I just love and I find so rich and so vibrant and so supportive. And I think you need that in any organization. In any organization, you have like that little support system. (Black heterosexual female, age 43, executive vice president, public relations agency)

Formal groups such as employee network groups and public relations associations also created network opportunities and provided opportunities for practitioners with other professionals socially and professionally at work and outside of work. Three participants discussed at length their participation in their corporations' employee LGBT network group. Outside of formal network groups were networks of practitioners that provided a social and professional outlet for practitioners. An informal gathering of lesbian and gay male practitioners helped one practitioner as he transitioned in his career:

I would say that as I became more out in my sexuality and I met others, particularly in [large metropolitan city], like me, who were gay males and lesbians, particularly professionally, I think we bonded together. ... I don't think it directly helps me in my career, gotten me more money, or

anything like that, but as I'm sitting here now trying to decide what I want to do next in my life, this has been a great support group for me, a group of people with whom I can be very frank and open and laugh and have a good time and be obnoxious, but also I know that if I needed freelance work here or there or if I needed somebody to help me on a project, it would be the first group of people I might go to. (European American White gay male, age 38, vice president for marketing and communications, nonprofit)

The creator of this group, a former public relations executive and current freelance writer and editor, decided that the mainstream public relations organizations were not doing enough for the lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and transgendered community and decided to start a networking group of his own:

The only thing I would say traditionally is that I think our primary professional organization, PRSA, has come late to the gay issue, especially as many gay and lesbian public relations professionals as there are. I'm not sure if you're familiar, but they are just now setting up the gay and lesbian special interest groups. . . . That's shameful in a way. I mean for one thing this informal group that I started, I started five years ago and I was five years too late. So I'm a little ashamed of my professional organization that they started late, but better late than never. (White Caucasian gay male, age 40, writer/editor/public relations consultant, consultancy)

Overcompensation. Almost all of the participants of color explained the need to work and push themselves harder to excel and climb the corporate ladder. An African American heterosexual male who owned his own communication firm said, “You're always having to just prove yourself. And you're always in the position of having to run faster than your competition, than your White counterparts” (African American heterosexual male, age 37, managing partner, public relations firm). According to one African American account supervisor at a large agency, “It could be perception, it could be reality, but you know from the day that we're born, we're always taught you know you're gonna have to work, you have to work ten times hard and blah blah blah. And so you just kind of, you just kind of do. You know, you don't want to be judged as not capable of being able to do the work” (African American straight female, age 28, account supervisor, public relations agency). Some reiterated the adage that people of color needed to work several times harder and longer than Whites to get ahead in the workplace and that there were different measures for accountability and performance for “us” and for “them”:

To me, I felt that my other job, it was a public relations job, I don't know if it's self-induced pressure or whatnot. I almost feel kinda cliché saying it, but it's almost like I feel like I have to work twice as hard. And it's not, and that could be just my own, pressures that I put on myself or whatnot. But I feel like certain people can get away with certain things that I couldn't get away with. . . . You know, the girl down the hall can be a little ditzy and forget to do something, whereas if I forget to do something, it's

like, “Well, what happened?” (African American/Black female straight female, age 26, account executive, public relations agency)

However, two practitioners viewed this strategy of overcompensation as somewhat dated and not representative of all work settings. For the Black female account supervisor quoted earlier, the balance between her job and home life was important and necessary to her, and she realized that she didn’t have to work harder all the time, only smarter. One thing she appreciated about her current post was the evenness in the work environment and the erosion of that need to push so hard and so much: “We have that type of environment where you have a clear work-life balance and so anyway, that once you're able to prioritize what's important to you, you're able to really prioritize other things in life—your client work, your projects and activities.” A Mexican-American male who sits as the vice-president of publicity for a firm echoed the same sentiment. On his first day with his current company,

...within the first hour, I basically said well, just give me my desk, I’m ready to go, you know what I mean, instead of just like a lot of people would lounge around for the first day and greet and meet and everything. And I did, I did the cordials, but I was ready to go. Show me a desk and I’m ready to go. I’ve researched the company and let’s do it. Just give me a computer and a desk and I’ll start making contacts, introducing myself. I wrote a press release about myself so all my contacts would know where I was at the very first day. So I hit the ground running and I think they weren’t used to seeing that. (Caucasian Mexican American

heterosexual male, age 45, director of public relations and publicity,
corporate)

That first day, his bosses told him that he needed to relax. Since moving to his current job which is a more “chilled” environment, he has relaxed somewhat, but the drive to achieve goals is still there.

Disclosure. The inclusion of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals in the workplace has not been an easy adjustment for some organizations, and making the announcement of one’s orientation or coming out was not an option. According to one practitioner who believed she lost a job because she was a lesbian, information should come out or be revealed at specific times.

At [name of corporation]—in American society it is still generally not appropriate or accepted or expected. And those are three different shades of the same thing that someone says hi, I’m [participant’s name]. I’m bisexual. I mean that’s just not part of the early information that you give to people, and not part of the information you give to people who you don’t have a friendship with. And just heterosexual privilege is the unconscious announcement of one’s sexual orientation in so many ways, wearing the wedding ring, putting the pictures on the desk, talking about your vacation, your wife, your son, your husband, your family. And it’s unconscious. People don’t even think they’re announcing their sexual orientation, and they’re doing it all the time. Whereas a lesbian or a bisexual woman, I know that set of information, and that’s not true of me.

So I simply don't mention it. (European American bisexual female, age 56, principal, agency)

Unchecked heterosexism and homophobia and the fear of repercussions and persecutions if they did reveal their orientation forced some participants to lie and deny their sexual orientation. They passed and resorted to subterfuge in an effort to keep their jobs and earn a living.

Location and timing had much to do with coming out. Because of their location in the country and the decade, many practitioners did not disclose their sexual orientation in their first job. According to one public relations practitioner who started her first job in broadcasting during the 1980s:

Nobody knew anything about gay people back then. Who was gay in 1980 besides Truman Capote? Think about it. I'm trying to remember. I think Elton John might have been married then. Nobody was out. Gay people were the ABC after-school special. There wasn't Lifetime then. I'm trying to remember when Personal Best came out. That was later in the 80's. Billy Jean King was married. Nobody was out. (White gay/lesbian female, age 47, director of communications, corporate)

Another practitioner believed that he became more out once he moved to another city on the East Coast. His previous job and city inhibited his ability to be forward and open about his sexual orientation with his employer and colleagues:

. . . Being in [name of large metropolitan city] made a big difference, because being gay there just isn't that big of a deal. They're used to gay people in the workplace being out. It wasn't true in Washington, DC

where I had come from. I had considered myself a bit of a gay activist, but I still operated under kind of don't ask, don't tell policy at work. That, to me, was being out, and that's what I think it was like in 1997, outside of maybe New York and Los Angeles. You just didn't do it, because you know what, you have to pay the rent. I would have never denied it. I'd rather lose my job than that. I didn't let people know, and I didn't do huge things to cover it up, but I also didn't talk about it a lot. So this was the first job I was out on. I had made the decision that the next job I went to, even if it was in Washington, I was going to start fully out. It's difficult to do along the way. (White American gay male, age 37, president, agency/consultancy)

Along with passing in the actual workplace, practitioners also felt the need to pass in other settings. As practitioners networked in informal settings such as restaurants or homes, some felt the need to lie by omission, leaving out bits and pieces of their home lives, or passed completely, bringing along dates of the opposite sex.

I have been invited to, like in manufacturing, invited to plant managers' Christmas parties and things like that. And of course, there's always, the invitation gets extended to the spouse or to a date. And it's one of those things where if you're not quite comfortable with them or you don't quite know their take on things and you don't necessarily feel comfortable bringing a same-sex companion along, so you wind up going individually.

Yeah, I've had that happen in the past. (Caucasian gay male, age 33, manager of product communications, corporate)

The cost of passing had tremendous effects on many practitioners. Passing took an emotional and psychological price on many practitioners. According to one, not being able to bring her full self to the organization, to be out as a lesbian, limited her personally and professionally.

I couldn't be myself in terms of being a lesbian. So I kept that secret for many years at great psychological cost. And I didn't realize until afterward just what a psychological toll it had taken on me. But when you lead a double life like that, it's very taxing. And you—I've read some of the literature where people have passed for White, and I feel like I passed for straight all those years. And I had to be discreet and very careful. I would a lot of times forego relationships, because it just got too complicated. And I was pretty much by myself for most of those years, because I just thought it was too dangerous to have that known. And I didn't really understand it to the extent that I do now. And I didn't feel very good about it. (Caucasian lesbian female, age 51, associate professor, higher education)

For another practitioner, maintaining the cover of heterosexuality placed a significant weight and burden on himself. That carried over into his workplace and his performance.

When I was not able to fully or I chose not fully bring who I was to the workplace that affected my work performance. I think of it kind of like, it

created a drag on this as I was trying to navigate through the organization.

If a person can comfortably bring all of who they are to the workplace, then they're going to, gonna be freed from the burden of having to invest energy in trying to cover up and invest that energy more in more productive ways. (White gay male, executive vice president, public relations agency)

The practice of coming out was treated by several participants as a continuous unfolding and unfurling process. The dilemma and anguish with coming out, according to many practitioners, is the process of revelation that must be ventured into every time a new colleague is ushered around the pod of cubicles. For one, it can be a challenge and a frustration. For another, because of the size of her organization, coming out became a matter of proximity within the working group and closeness to source:

The way I choose to do it is if someone starts to talk to me about their husband or children, I'm thinking, okay, we're there. You're going to talk to me about your husband or kids or about your relationships or about your life, then you're going to hear about mine. Will I initiate that with people? I'll initiate that with people that I know I'm going to have an ongoing relationship with, and it doesn't hurt if we like each other to begin with. (White gay/lesbian female, age 47, director of communications, corporate)

Minor adjustments for the mainstream. These are subtle adjustments or movements that people of color use in organizational life to surface in and out of the dominant, mainstream culture. Several participants found themselves having to

disengage from their normal selves and everyday lives to a more corporate or “White” persona in order to fit what was deemed appropriate for the situation or occasion. One example is a manager of the public relations department for a cosmetics company who has a different persona with the elite media such as the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* because of their perceptions of public relations and their assumptions of the beauty industry: “On the phone when I’m dealing with the media I feel like Amy, my inner White girl, comes out. Hi, this is [name of participant] with [name of corporation]. That bull.”

According to the practitioners, the majority of the time the changes were for the small things: changes in tone of voice or the use of certain words. In one case, the change that was required was greater: a Black manager for a public relations firm was asked by her bosses to change her name because her name was too ethnic or too Black and for the sake of the clients who she would be representing to the media.

He goes, what do you think about changing your name? . . . But he was like, over the phone, you can’t tell if you’re black or White. That might work to your advantage. He didn’t come right out and say your name is too ethnic. He was like, I was just thinking about you getting a shorter name so it’s easier whenever you do your pitches, more punchy name. At the very end of the conversation, he did use the word ethnic. I kind of just looked at him, because I wasn’t quite sure. Like he had been thinking about this, and he had a lot of reasons why he thought I should do it. He wasn’t necessarily saying do it, but he pretty much was.

(Black/African American heterosexual female, age 25, public relations manager, agency)

Humor. Episodes of humor between organizational actors were recounted by participants; these instances were deployed for a multitude of reasons. Humorous comments and critiques on behalf of the participants—especially when they ridiculed themselves or made light of their identity and their position—were done to make situations less threatening and more comfortable for members of the dominant cultural group. One participant provided a clear example of the first circumstance:

One time we had this meeting. And my co-worker had this like spiral perm in her hair, and she said, “This meeting is so long you know my hair used to be straight when this meeting started.” And I said, “This meeting is so long I used to be straight when this meeting started.” And like there was laughter throughout the room. And you know everybody loved it and loved that I was like you know, could joke about it.

(Caucasian American lesbian female, age 42, director, agency)

In this situation, the encounter was an attempt “to break the ice,” an attempt to show that this manager could blend in with everyone else and joke about herself. She was not the lesbian stereotype: somber, stern, and aiming for political correctness all the time. As this practitioner mentioned, “I think if I were to start to talk about my personal life and dating and stuff like that, yeah, I think people would start to cringe. I don't know if I've ever imposed that on folks” (Caucasian American lesbian female, age 42, director, agency).

Humor was also used to discredit colleagues who made insensitive or off-color remarks. In another instance with the same manager, a junior employee attempted to put down the practitioner. An employee she supervised teased her in the office. She commented that he had done a good job on a project and he said, "Thanks, Brokeback." Her response was the second type: She retaliated by playing off an oft-quoted movie line: "I quoted the movie back at him. I don't know if you're familiar with it. But I said, I wish I knew how to quit you because that's what Heath Ledger says to the Jake's character in the movie. And so, it's just kind of this quick comeback that I could think of. And I thought it was kind of appropriate. So I joked about it." For this practitioner, it is easier for her to grin and bear these encounters. She considers the employee harmless and used humor to disarm him.

To disarm homophobic comments made by clients and workplace equals, lesbian and gay practitioners would typically use humor to make light of homophobic attitudes. When used, this application throws the target off-balance, challenging and confronting their beliefs. For example, one practitioner challenged the homophobia and heterosexist posturing of his clients.

And [the photographer] wanted them, the 2 doctors a little closer together. As they're getting closer together, Cathy, the photographer, said, "Oh no, not that close." It wasn't a joke; she just meant she didn't want them physically that close in the picture. And then I made a little joke about well, this is for, part of our marketing is toward the gay and lesbian community, which was a joke. But one of the doctors especially was very uncomfortable by that. Hey, I'm not gay, kind of thing. That straight

macho kind of—which I laugh at. So it wasn't directed at me. But it's something that I remember that I just think is funny sometimes. You encounter that because as a well-adjusted gay person, I will make jokes about everything. And part of making jokes is ribbing straight people about gay stuff. (Caucasian gay male, binational, age 43, publicist, agency/consultancy)

Separating work and home spheres. A definite bifurcation of work and home life reiterated throughout the conversations I had with my participants. However, the distancing and self-presentation strategies took different forms among various groups.

What Black women wanted to do in the workplace was to accomplish the work goals and tasks they were challenged and appointed to do. Several practitioners were indifferent and hostile to the informal conversations that contributed to the building of informal associations and contacts and helps practitioners navigate through and up organizational networks. They saw it as a drain on their workday activities or an encroachment on the part of themselves they wanted to keep separate. According to one practitioner, the activity of eating lunch with her co-workers was too much togetherness and camaraderie for her; it impeded her time to run errands and get out of the office. Beyond that, she was a private person.

So I try to do it when I'm here on Mondays or whatever. But that's just not me. They'll sit around; they'll talk about everything that's happened in their lives or whatever. But I try to keep my private life separate. And you know, I am friendly with everybody here. But you know, I just kind

of draw that line. I draw the line to some extent. (African American heterosexual female, age 43, public relations specialist, corporate)

A young African American practitioner found her work environment difficult because of the number of people in the office and the manner in which she would appear if she did not act sociable or comply with other's demands that she participate in social chatter.

I will be sociable, I will be respectful, I will be cordial. What I do not do is bring my personal business to work nor do I want to discuss certain personal matters at work. I do not come to work to be friends... I don't want to come to your kid's birthday party. Those are things it takes time to establish, but my first priority is to come to work and I have had to tell my boss I come to work to work. I've had to tell my boss to leave me alone because I come here to work and this constant socializing, this constant inconsequential conversation that happens about your day and you throwing temper tantrums and you being emotional at work interferes with what I am here to do. (Black African American heterosexual female, age 26, communications coordinator, nonprofit)

Other practitioners were cautious about personal self-presentation and avoided engaging activities that would be seen as stereotypical of African Americans or Blacks in the workplace. These were deliberate and conscious acts; these practitioners engaged in subtle actions that refuted labels, typecasts, and perceptions of Blacks in general. They wanted to be seen as competent and capable public relations professionals, not as walking caricatures. For one practitioner, this included avoiding alcohol at the annual

company Christmas party for the sake of propriety and face, but she realized that the repercussions for herself and her White colleagues would not be the same. After a work colleague got very inebriated at the Christmas party, she discussed the event with another African American who brought up the issue of appearance and comfort among colleagues:

He was like, it's funny. And everybody's laughing about it. But you know, you could never do that. Like if you had done that it would have been like, "Ohmigod," whereas when George did it, it was like, "Ha ha ha, George got drunk." I don't know if my boss necessarily would have consciously been aware of that. But I think at some point, in some level he was expecting more from me. Granted I set that expectation in terms of here's how we interact. But also, when you fall or when you slip up, it's perceived as a large disadvantage against me as opposed to average White Joe when he does it. (African American heterosexual female, age 30, account executive, advertising agency)

For lesbians and gay men, this divide emerged because of a need to maintain comfort levels in the workplace, and this was done through self-censoring. Self-censoring is a strategy that integrates elements of avoidance, evasion, and self-editing into daily practice (Woods, 1993; Button, 2001; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001).

You know I have generally at work been very quiet about being gay. I have never denied it, but people tend not to ask. And I just find my personal approach is if I socialize with someone outside of work, then I'm open about it. But if it's somebody's that just a work colleague and

someone that I don't have a personal friendship with outside of work, then I just leave it alone and let it go because personally I feel that – Often if people know that you're gay and they have biases about that then it taints your, it can taint your work relationship, so they judge you based on that before they even assess your personality, your character, the quality of your work. So I usually try to leave that alone so that they at least get to know that about me first before introducing the other.

(Caucasian gay male, age 33, manager of product communications, corporate)

The choice to separate or to distance rather than meld elements of the home, social, and work life together is a pragmatic and political choice made by practitioners faced with limited opportunities of the social network.

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Natalie Tindall. Currently, I am working on my doctorate at the University of Maryland.

This spring, I am conducting my dissertation research on the experiences of public relations practitioners in the workplace. My research will explore the career paths of communications professionals and what they think about public relations. I am asking for your help with this project.

I understand the importance and nature of your work and the many demands on your time. However, I would like to speak with you in person for about an hour.

The identities of participants and their organizations will remain confidential. Your responses will in no way be connected to your name. Your participation is voluntary, and you can decline to answer specific questions or to end your participation at any time without penalty. You will not be asked questions that would compromise your positions with your employers or your positions as public relations practitioners.

You may want to verify my identity or ask questions about my research before you respond. If so, please feel free to contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Linda Aldoory, at 301-405-6528 or by e-mail to <laldoory@umd.edu>, or me at 301- 405-8976 or <ntindall1@umd.edu>.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you are willing to participate. I would like to have all the interviews done by April 4, 2006. Your participation would make a significant contribution to the study. Please consider seriously sharing your opinions about public relations and your work.

Sincerely,

Natalie Tindall

Doctoral Student

Department of Communication

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<http://www.comm.umd.edu/people/students/ntindall.html>

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

1. What influenced you to enter public relations?
 - major in college?
 - where did you go to college?
 - significant influence on your development as a practitioner?
2. Do you have any mentors? Where do your mentors work? What projects do they work on?
3. How have your mentors helped advance or promote your career? What career advice have they given you?
4. Tell me about your position in this organization.
 - What do you do? Tell me about your responsibilities.
 - What is your job title?
 - How long have you been with your company?
 - To whom do you report?
 - Do you supervise anyone?
 - What are his or her duties?
5. Why did you want to work here? Sense of how long you would like to stay?
6. Currently, how many people of color work in the public relations function/communication function of this organization?
 - What is the exact title for this department?
 - Do you work with a mix, mostly men, or mostly women?
 - How do you identify racially/ethnically?
 - How do you identify sexually? What is your sexual orientation?

7. How many of your projects are related to minority publics, organizations, or issues?
8. How many of your projects are related to mainstream projects?
9. What is your company like?
 - How would you describe the culture?
10. How would you classify your role in the department?
 - Are you a manager or a technician? Why?
11. Do you feel you can be yourself in this organization?
 - Can you bring your whole self to work? When, where, why not?
 - Are there ways you deliberately tailor yourself so you fit more with the organization? How so? Has this changed over time? Do you feel there are limitations or barriers in your work? What are they?
12. How do you think your work has been accepted by your organization? By your colleagues? By your mentors?
13. In what contexts do you interact with senior management?
 - How often?
 - What is usually discussed?
 - How accepted do you feel?
 - Where do these discussions take place?
14. What type of access to the senior management of the organization do you have?
15. What, if anything, have you done to ensure the way others (senior management, colleagues) view you in the manner you would like?
 - Do you think your efforts have been a success?
 - How have others responded to your efforts?

16. When you hear the word “power”, what is the first thing that comes to mind?
- Why?
17. How do you define power?
- How have you achieved power in your role?
 - What activities enhance your power in your organization?
18. How do you think observers feel about the power you have obtained as a practitioner?
19. What instances of racism/heterosexism/discrimination have you experienced in your organization?
- How did that make you feel?
 - How did you deal with that?
20. Have you experienced discrimination in your career?
- If yes: What type?
 - If no: Why not?
21. Do you think your gender has affected your job or career?
- If yes: How?
 - If no: Why not?
22. Do you think your race/ethnicity/sexual orientation has affected your job or career?
- If yes: How?
 - If no: Why not?
23. What were some critical incidents or experience if any that affected your understanding of your sexual orientation or race/ethnicity in the organization?

24. In what ways does being a (fill in with the appropriate racial and sexual orientation identifier) at the senior level/junior level in the organization affect the way you do your job?

25. Do you think people respond differently to you as a gay Hispanic man/heterosexual Black woman (fill in with appropriate racial and sexual orientation identifier) than they would, say a gay White man/ lesbian Black woman (fill with another or opposing racial/ethnic/sexual orientation/gender identifier) in the same position?

- Why or why not?
- In what way is the response different?
- What is an example of when this occurred?
- How did you react? How did you adjust your behavior?

26. Is there anything else that you believe is important or interesting that we have not covered that you would like to share?

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